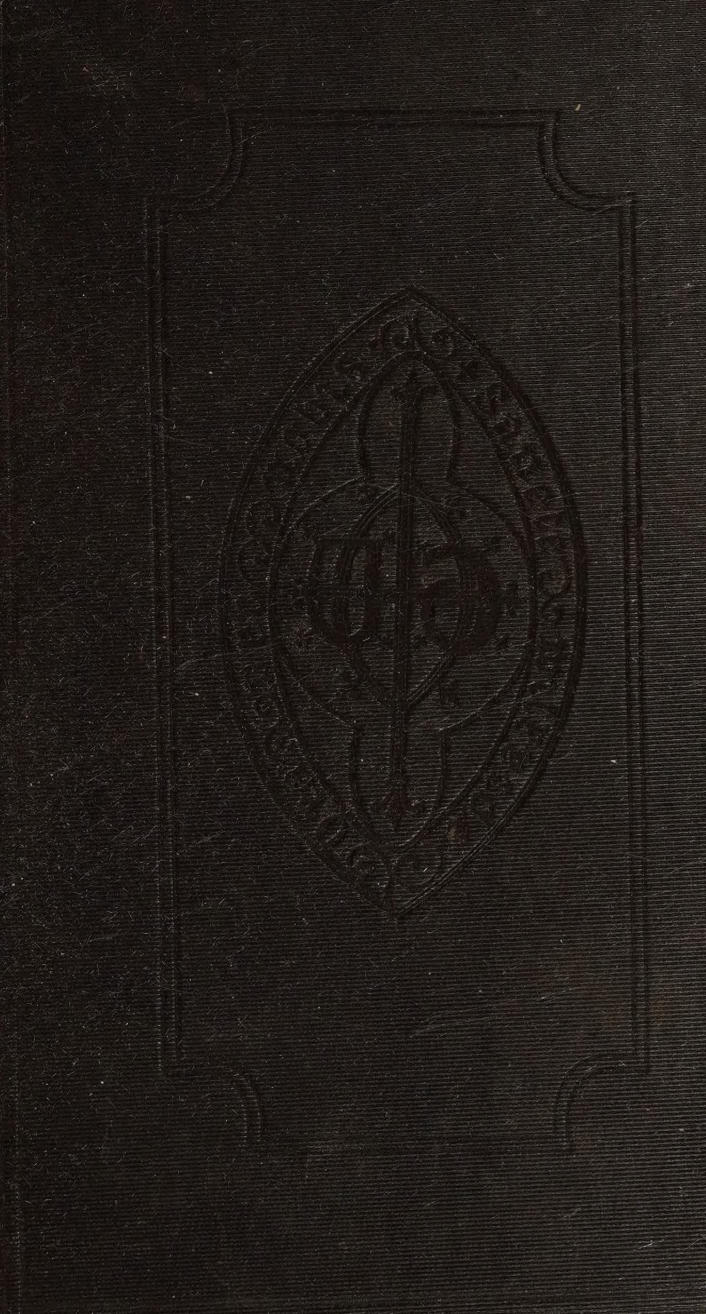

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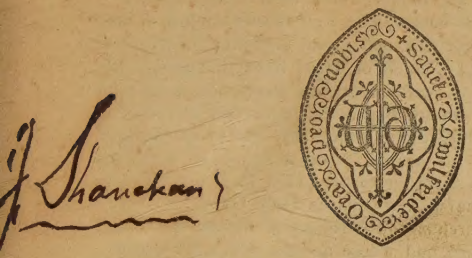
AD MAJOREM DEI SANCTÆQUE MARIÆ GLORIAM.

The Saints and Servants of God.



LIVES OF THE CANONIZED SAINTS,

AND

The Servants of God,

BEATIFIED, OR DECLARED VENERABLE BY AUTHORITY,

And others who are commonly reputed among Catholics to have died in the odour of sanctity, especially in modern times.

1. It is proposed to publish a Series of such Lives, translated from the Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Latin, in small 8vo. volumes, of about 400 pages each, and to bring out at least six volumes in the year.

2. The Editor and Translators not making any profit on the work, the volumes will be sold as cheaply as possible. Each vol. will be sold separately, and will be complete in itself, except when one Life occupies more volumes than one, and the price not exceed 4s.

3. The works translated from will be in most cases the Lives drawn up *for* or *from* the processes of canonization or beatification, as being more full, more authentic, and more replete with anecdote, thus enabling the reader to become better acquainted with the Saint's disposition and spirit; while the simple matter-of-fact style of the narrative is, from its unobtrusive character, more adapted for spiritual reading than the views and generalizations, and apologetic extenuations of more recent biographers.

4. The objects of the friends who have jointly undertaken this task have been—1. To supply English Catholics with a cabinet-library of interesting as well as edifying reading, especially for families, schools, and religious refectories, which would for many

reasons be particularly adapted for these times, and would with God's blessing act as a counter influence to the necessarily deadening and chilling effects which the neighbourhood of heresy and the consequent prevalence of earthly principles and low views of grace may have on the temper and habits of mind even of the faithful;—2. To present to our other countrymen a number of samples of the fruit which the system, doctrine, and moral discipline established by the holy and blessed Council of Trent have produced, and which will be to inquirers really in earnest about their souls, an argument more cogent than any that mere controversy can allege; and 3. To satisfy a humble desire which they feel to spread the honour and love of the ever-blessed Queen of Saints, by showing how greatly an intense devotion to her aided in forming those prodigies of heroic virtue with which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to adorn the Church since the schism of Luther, *more than in almost any previous times*, and whose actions, with a few exceptions, are known to English laymen only in a very general way, and from meagre abridgments; while the same motive will prevent the Series being confined to modern saints *exclusively*.

5. The work is published with the permission and approval of superiors. Every volume containing the Life of a person not yet canonized or beatified by the Church will be prefaced by a protest in conformity with the decree of Urban VIII., and in all Lives which introduce questions of mystical theology great care will be taken to publish nothing which has not had adequate sanction, or without the reader being informed of the nature and amount of the sanction.

Lives already Published.

S. Philip Neri, 2 vols.
S. Thomas of Villanova, } in 1 vol.
S. Francis Solano, }
S. Rose of Lima, }
B. Colomba of Rieti, } in 1 vol.
S. Juliana Falconieri, }
S. Alphonso Liguori, vols. 1 & 2, to be continued.
B. Sebastian of Apparizio, 1 vol.
S. Ignatius, vol. 1, to be completed in 2 vols.

Lives in hand.

S. Stanislas Kostka, S. J., 1568,
S. John of God, 1550,
S. Felix of Cantalice, 1587,
S. Camillus of Lellis, 1614,
S. Gertrude, 1292,
S. Theresa, 1582,
S. Veronica Giuliani, 1727,
S. Peter of Alcantara, 1562,
S. Giovanni Colombini, Founder of the Gesuats, 1367,
S. John Francis Regis, S. J., 1640,
S. Francis Jerome, S. J., 1716,
S. Jane Frances de Chantal, 1641,
S. Vincent of Paul, 1660,
S. Francesca Romana, 1440,
S. Cajetan of Thienna, 1547,
S. Turibius of Lima, 1606,
S. Francis of Assisi, 1226,
S. Charles Borromeo, 1584,
S. Philip Benizi, 1285,
S. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, 1607,
S. Pascal Baylon, 1592,

S. Catherine of Bologna, 1463,
S. Joseph Calasanctius, 1648,
S. Catherine of Siena, 1380,
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S. Francis Xavier, S. J., 1552,
S. James de la Marche, 1476,
S. John of the Cross, 1591,
S. Louis Bertrand, 1581,
The Martyrs of Gorcum, 1572,
S. Mary of Oignies, 1213,
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Ven. Fabrizio d' Aste, Founder of the Oratory of Forlì, 1655,
V. Claver, S. J., 1654,
V. Benedict Joseph Labrè, 1783,
V. Camilla Borghese Orsini,
V. Margaret Mary Alacoque, 1690,
V. Mariana of Gesù, 1645,
V. Berchmans, S. J., 1621,
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V. Card. Odeschalchi, S. J., 1841,
V. Yvan, of the French Oratory, and Founder of the Order of our Lady of Mercy, 1653,
V. Santi, Founder of the Oratory of Padua, 1650,
Father Auger, S. J. 1591,
F. Vincent Caraffa, S. J., 1649,
F. Segneri, S. J., 1694,
F. Pinamonti, S. J., 1703,
F. Balthasar Alvarez, S. J., 1580,
M. Olier, Founder of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, 1657,
F. Licinio Piò, Founder of the Oratory of Bologna, 1632,
F. Bini, Founder of the Oratory of Florence, 1635,
F. Matteucci, Founder of the Oratory of Camerino,
F. Dionisio Pieragostini, of the Oratory of Camerino,
F. Prever, of the Oratory of Turin, 1751,
F. Sozzini, of the Oratory of Rome, 1680,
Sister Bernardine Roussen, of Boulogne, 1823,
Florence de Werquignœuil, Benedictiness, 1638,
The Fioretti of S. Francis,
The Companions of S. Philip,
The Companions of S. Alphonso,
F. Prosper Airoli, of the Roman Oratory,
Flaminia Papi, Roman Lady.

Lives contemplated.

S. Aloysius, S. J., 1591,
S. Fidelis of Sigmaringa, 1622,
S. Jerome Æmiliani, 1537,
S. Laurence Giustinian, 1455,
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S. Seraphino di Monte Granario, 1604,
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S. Margaret of Cortona, 1297,
S. Nicolas of Tolentino, 1306,
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S. Elzear of Salvan, 1323,
S. Lidano, Abbot,
S. Andrew Corsini, 1373,
S. Delphina, wife of S. Elzear,
S. Bruno, 1125, [1369,
S. Juliana of Retinne, 1258
S. Lidwine, 1380,
S. Joseph of Cupertino, 1663,
S. John Nepomuc, 1383,
S. Louis of France, 1270,
S. Bonaventure, 1274,
S. Raymund of Pennafort, 1275,
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S. Benedict XI., 1304,
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S. Joanna, Queen of France, 1505,

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V. Agnes of Jesus, Dominicaness,
V. Angelo ab Acrio, [1634,
V. Theresa Redi of the Heart of Jesus, Carmelitess, 1766,
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F. Caravita,
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Canonico Rossi,
F. Zucchi,
F. Nobletz,
F. Eudes,
Duchess of Montmorency,
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F. Brydayne,
Cardinal Cheverus,
Girolamo Mazzola, S. J.
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F. De Rancè, 1700,
De Renty,
F. Saintpè, of the French Oratory,
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F. Antonio Glielmo, [1636,
Don Lelio Sericchi,
Don Gregorio Lopez,
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Brother Felix, Capuchin,
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Luigi Corradini, } ars,
Angela Pozzi,
Felice Moschini, of the Institute of Charity,
Mechitar, Founder of the Armenian Benedictines, 1746,
F. Surin, S. J., 1665,
F. John Chrysostom,
Sister Maria Felice Spinelli, Capuchiness of Venice,
John Baptist Magnanti, of the Oratory of Aquila,
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Cæsar Louis Canali of Bologna,
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Sister Clare of the Angels,
Domenico Gambera,
Buonsignore Cacciaguerra,
Agatha Belfiore di S. Paterniano,
Rosa Maria Martini of Florence,
Countess Vittoria Valvasone Beltrame,
Anna Maria Emanuela Buonamici,
F. Joseph Vaz, of the Portuguese Oratory in Ceylon,

Of the Oratory of Naples,

This list is not put forward as by any means complete, or as intending to exclude other Lives, especially those of the older Saints. The Editor will be glad to hear from any who may wish to satisfy their devotion, and employ their leisure to the greater glory of God and our dear Lady, by contributing translations of the Lives either of older Saints or of those mentioned in this list, or any others who have died in the odour of sanctity, and are not named here. The arduousness of the undertaking makes it very necessary for him earnestly to repeat his petition for coadjutors in his labours; and perhaps he may at the present time urge it more forcibly than before. Eight volumes of the Series are now published; the work has obtained an extensive circulation both in America and England; besides the many testimonies to its utility received from very various quarters among Catholics, not a few who are still unhappily out of the One Fold have borne witness to its attracting influence upon them; the increasing demand for books of devotion and ascetical divinity, while it proves the growing thirst after Christian perfection amongst us, shows how necessary as well as useful a Series of Lives of the Saints at length and in detail must be:—these are all so many grounds on which the Editor may rest his claim for co-operation. Although many Lives are advertised as being in hand, yet the translators have in most cases so many other important avocations that a still larger number of labourers are required to feed the press steadily, and to enable the Editor to go on keeping his promise to the public.

Circumstances have hitherto delayed the publication of Pope Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue, but the project has not been abandoned, and some progress has been made in the work. It is a portion of that pontiff's great book on the Canonization of the Saints, and contains a most interesting account of the tests used by the Church in examining ecstasies, visions, raptures, the higher degrees of mental prayer, and the practice of bodily austerities, and supernatural penances. It will be bound and lettered uniformly with the Series of the Modern Saints, and will be found replete with most interesting anecdotes, as well as being of immense use to spiritual directors, and to all students of ascetical theology and Christian philosophy. An original dissertation on Mystical Theology will be prefixed to one of the future volumes of the Series, in which an attempt will be made to distinguish between the heights of Catholic contemplation and the vagaries of recent heretics, and the doctrine of the most judicious and discreet Mystics will be stated and explained from the authors most approved among theologians, and such general information given on the subject as will be interesting and edifying to ordinary readers.

A number of the portraits of the Saints prefixed to most of the volumes are to be had separately, on sale at the Publishers, for those who may wish to increase their collection of religious engravings, or to distribute pictures of the Saints to whom they may have a devotion; and the Essay on Canonization, published with the first volume of St. Alphonso, may now be purchased in a separate form. The Editor will be glad to receive any suggestion which may assist him either in meeting the wishes of subscribers or in making the Series a more complete and perfect Library of Catholic Biography.

F. W. FABER,
PRIEST OF THE ORATORY.

Maryvale,
Feast of St. Alphonso Liguori, 1848

On the 24th of October will be Published

THE LIVES OF THE

COMPANIONS OF ST. PHILIP NERI;

And on the 24th of December, the Third Vol. of

THE LIFE OF

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI;

When an additional Volume will be delivered, containing the

LIVES OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER CLAVER,

AND

CARDINAL ODESCHALCHI,

OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS.

RICHARDSON AND SON, DERBY.

THE LIFE

OF

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

VOL. II.

POPE BENEDICT XIV.

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIFE

OF

S. ALPHONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,

BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA OF THE GOTHS,

AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

VOL. II.

J. Shanahan

NEW YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN,
151, FULTON STREET.
LONDON: THOMAS RICHARDSON AND SON,
172, FLEET ST.; 9, CAPEL ST. DUBLIN; AND DERBY.

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October. 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Combyopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipotamus.

TO

THE REGULAR CLERGY

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

THE CHILDREN

OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,

ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,

AND THE SONS

OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,

THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,

AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,

WHO,

IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT

OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,

OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE

OF THEIR HIRED LODGING,

HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,

AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL

THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,

AND WHO,

THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,

AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,

THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION

OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,

HAVE PERPETUATED,

AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,

THE BLESSED LINEAGE

OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

ST. WILFRID'S,
FEAST OF ST. BERNARD,
M. D. CCC. XLVII.

PREFACE.

The Life of St. Alphonso Liguori, which is now presented to English readers, was written about six-and-forty years ago by one of the Redemptorist Fathers, Antonio Maria Tannoja. He was received into the Congregation by St. Alphonso himself, when he was about eighteen years old; he lived for a long time under the same roof with him, and was an eye-witness of the Saint's actions and a partner in his toils, as well as having access from his position to all the authentic documents which concerned the life of the Saint or the history of his Congregation. Not content with this, while St. Alphonso was living at Nocera F. Antonio Maria persuaded some members of the Congregation to watch him and take notes of his actions. Our author was also favoured by his acquaintance with Ercole and Gaetan, the Saint's brothers, with Don Januario Fatigati, of the Chinese College, Mgr. Festa, Bishop of Rizzio, and others. Tan-

noja's work was published in three vols. 4to, and has, as far as we can learn, never been reprinted.

In 1842 the Dutch Redemptorists of Wittem in Limbourg put out a French translation of Tannoja with the following additions: 1. Certain of the Saint's papers never before edited, remarks on duels, answers to objections made to him at the court of Naples, spiritual Avvisi, and the like; 2. A supplement to his Life, with an account of the steps taken in order to his canonization; 3. Short Lives of the Saint's companions and other early Fathers of the Congregation who died in the odour of sanctity, some written by the Saint himself, and others by Tannoja; 4. A table of the houses of the Redemptorists, and some notice of the female religious who regard St. Alphonso as their founder. This translation was dedicated by F. Heilig to Archbishop Gousset.

It is from this last work that our translation has been made. It was advertised to appear in an abridged form before the prospectus of this Series appeared, and the translator then most

kindly and liberally placed her papers at the Editor's disposal. They extended as far as the fifty-seventh chapter of the second book, and are rather a copious compendium; from that place the translation, by another hand, is faithful and entire.

Notwithstanding all his claims upon our confidence, an objection has been raised to Tannoja's work on the ground that it exposes with too truthful and unsparing a hand the state of disorder, neglect, and depravity which prevailed in St. Alphonso's diocese and in other parts of the kingdom of Naples at that time. It is urged that this must necessarily give scandal, as well to those who are weak in the faith as to aliens, who may read in a less friendly spirit. It is difficult to see wherein the force of this objection consists, unless it be supposed that readers would conceive they saw in such a state of corruption a proof that God had failed in His promises to the Church. But if we are under any obligation to treat so gross a misunderstanding with respect, then we must at once suppress

well-nigh one half the documents from which ecclesiastical history is drawn, beginning with St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians. The history of the Church is and must necessarily be a double record; it is a chronicle of man's wayward sinful thwartings, as well as of God's long forbearance, or merciful interposition, or miraculous support: and we have grave lessons to learn from the one as well as from the other. Local corruptions, temporary decays, nay, partial losses, in no way interfere with God's promises to the Church, either as regards her holiness or her indefectibility. Witness at this moment the poor desolated regions of the once Christian East, or the Mediterranean shore of Africa; and the raising up of eminent Saints from time to time to restore the fallen and to revive the withered and to strengthen the sickly seems also to have been one especial way in which the Divine Promises have been most signally carried out and fulfilled. Nay more, if by the canonization of these Saints the Church bids us study their heroic deeds and imitate them in our measure, then

it becomes absolutely necessary that we should have before us a full and accurate picture of the evils of their times or localities. For it was by resisting those evils, by suffering persecution in consequence, by having to reconcile distressingly conflicting duties, and the like, that they sanctified themselves; it was in these very things that the heroism of their virtue shone forth. What idea could we possibly form, for example, of such men as St. Bernard, St. Gregory VII., St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Charles Borromeo, and the Ven. Bartholomew de Martyribus, if we had not some insight into the corruptions which they combated, and the reforms which they sacrificed their lives to carry through? The same may be said of those saints who introduced reforms into religious orders, when the first fervour was decayed, such as St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, and St. Peter of Alcantara. And all this applies with peculiar force to St. Alphonso. He, as they, had a mission to fulfil to the Church of these latter times, and we cannot even so much as understand that mission if we

court unfaithful records or willingly close our eyes to the evils which he found. To an intellectual as well as to a simple reader there must surely be more edification in the improvement wrought and in the manner in which it was wrought, than there can be scandal in the evil state of things which needed such reform; God repairing is a more cheering as well as a more solemn sight than man marring; and after all, come what will, truth is the edifying thing; and to our eyes the copious unsparing details of Tannoja form one of his chief excellences as the biographer of a Saint, and exact our praise rather than need our apology.

This same love of full and faithful narrative, which so wins our confidence by its refreshing boldness with the sins and disorders of ecclesiastics, has led the writer not unfrequently into a minuteness and prolixity which will perhaps by most readers be pronounced tiresome. Thus the accounts of St. Alphonso's missions are so accurate and minute as to be full of repetitions, which greatly impede the current of the narrative. With the ex-

ception, however, of the earlier part of the work, as already noticed, the present translation is in no way abridged; the work was retained in its fulness, first, because faithfulness is the leading feature of the present Series of translated biographies; secondly, because it is not so much literary gratification as spiritual improvement for which we are catering, and when the Life is read slowly and in portions, as spiritual reading, the repetition is not felt as wearisome, and may actually serve to greater edification; and thirdly, because the influence of St. Alphonso upon the whole Church has been so marked and wonderful, and continues so to develope itself more and more every day, absorbing into itself, so to speak, the mission, the school, the pulpit, the confessional, and even the spirit of old established orders and congregations, that every detail which either illustrates of itself or confirms by its repetition anything in the character and temper of one so sent from God with a peculiar work to do, has a value to attentive readers and deserves to be recorded. As the wind blowing where it will,

and no one knowing whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so has been the kind and gentle spirit of St. Alphonso, first nurtured among the children of St. Philip, winning its way and insinuating itself in the most secret places of the Church, everywhere smoothing the sinner's return to God, everywhere exorcising as well the stiffness of mistaken conscience as the harshness of unaffectionate rigour, and breeding in all hearts that love which finds in strictness towards self an almost unlimited fountain of indulgence to others.

F. W. Faber,
Priest of the Oratory.

Maryvale,
Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, 1848.

P. S. The Lives of the Companions of St. Philip Neri will be published on the 25th of October.

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THE LIFE

OF

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

BOOK II. CONTINUED.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The year 1749 was a happy epoch for the Congregation, on account of the admission of many subjects distinguished for their sanctity not less than their science. Encouraged by the pious dispositions of the king, Alphonso having obtained for his Congregation the approbation of so many bishops, determined to apply for the approbation of the Pope. He addressed a petition to Benedict XIV., by the hands of Mgr. Puoti, a prelate whom his Holiness honoured with his particular friendship. When the Pope was made acquainted with the good Alphonso and his Congregation had done, he ordered Cardinal Gentili, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council of Trent, to charge Cardinal Spinelli, who had made a report on the Congregation the year preceding, to take information and declare his sentiments on the subject. His Eminence rejoiced in this commission, asked for the rules,

and gave them to the Canon Simede and his auditor, the Abbe Blaschi, for examination. All three admired the wisdom with which everything had been arranged. The cardinal however wished to retrench the rigorous fast on Friday, that during Advent and the Novena of the Holy Ghost meagre diet should not be obligatory, and that the collation of the evening should be more nourishing than on the fasts of the Church. The cardinal would not second Alphonso in his spirit of penance, fearing for the health of the subjects when undergoing so much fatigue. He admired the wisdom of the rules touching the government of the Congregation. He approved the division of power, but limited the consultors general to six instead of twelve, whom Alphonso had established, to imitate the College of the Twelve Apostles.

Once assured of the approbation of the Cardinal Spinelli, every one advised Alphonso to go himself to Rome, but he concealed his humility under the pretence of his infirmities, and confided the whole affair to the management of Father Villani. Many bishops besides those in whose dioceses the Congregation was established wrote to give them favourable testimony at the court of Rome, among others Mgr. Rossi, who expressed himself in the following terms: "These worthy missionaries, besides the great services they render to the inhabitants of the country, and the spiritual exercises they give in their own houses to all classes of people, priests and laymen, do still greater good in the places where they

give missions by their exemplary conduct and the truly apostolic zeal of a charity without bounds."

They had besides, letters from the most distinguished personages to the Cardinal Orsini and the Duke de Sora. The cardinal knew Alphonso by report only, but the duke having met him at Naples had had opportunities to appreciate his virtues. To these two personages the Congregation were under the greatest obligations, for they never ceased exerting all their interest until the business was finished satisfactorily. The general of the order of St. Basil, with the missionaries of St. Vincent of Paul, exerted themselves in their favour. "Our founder," said one of these fathers to F. Villani, "was not an envious saint." They also offered to yield up to the Congregation a foundation they had just made at Sublac. The abbot of another religious order gave them great assistance. Cardinal Bisozzi was named Reporter. They had wished for Cardinal Orsini, but Cardinal Gentili the prefect said to Villani, that by this appointment he secured for them a man of still more weight, and when Orsini was told of it, he remarked, "You have now two instead of one," and afterwards went himself to deliver the rescript into Bisozzi's hands.

All proceeded happily. They agreed with Bisozzi on two most important points. He desired only some change in the mode of arrangement, and for this purpose it was placed in the hands of F. Sergio, of the Congregation of Pious Work-

ers. This father having a good deal to do, said to F. Villani, that the matter was not so easy, and would take some years; he might therefore return to Naples, and wait there till he was recalled to Rome. But Villani replied, "I am here to finish this affair, and if your Reverence has too many occupations to attend to this, I will speak to his Eminence." This reply surprised Sergio, and Villani added that there was nothing difficult to arrange, as they had already agreed with the cardinal on the most essential points. Sergio looked very grave, and said, "Of what use am I then?"* F. St. Severino, who was then in the Congregation of Pious Workers, happening to be present, Villani proposed it should be given to him; this was accordingly done, and one day was found sufficient for the whole business, which, according to Sergio, would have required years.

When the rule was presented to the Sacred Congregation they retrenched the fourth vow as superfluous, the vow by which they engaged to place themselves at the disposal of the Pope, to be sent when he would to preach to the heathen. "We suppose," said the Cardinals,

* This father had left the Congregation of Alphonso, and entered that of the Pious Workers, but not having yet found his vocation he was so unhappy that one day he said to F. Villani, "I wish I could exchange places with the most miserable street-porter in Rome." Full of repentance for the past, he sought to be re-admitted into the Congregation, but Alphonso would never consent. And at a later period God showed what had been His designs upon him, by raising him to the Archiepiscopal See of Palermo, where he became a model of zeal, of wisdom, and of virtue.

"that all religious orders are always ready to obey the first signal given by the Holy Father." Alphonso, who would take from his Congregation the means of amassing wealth, had fixed that the rents of no house should exceed one thousand two hundred ducats. All admired his moderation, but in consideration of unforeseen expenses that might come upon them they fixed the maximum at one thousand five hundred, for ordinary houses, and two thousand for the houses of novices or students. The cardinals approved of everything else, and full of admiration for the rule, they unanimously approved of it. Cardinal Bisozzi was particularly pleased with the regulation to return for a short time, after an interval of some months, to the places where a mission had been given, a regulation altogether new, and which he conceived would be an admirable means of preserving the fruits of a mission.

But the devil would not allow things to proceed without his interference. The auditor of Cardinal Bisozzi, after having read the approbation of Cardinal Spinelli, which exalted the great good done by the institute of Alphonso, and its utility to the kingdom, pretended that this meant the Congregation should be confined to the kingdom of Naples. This vote would have been embarrassing, but they applied immediately to Bisozzi, who said that Alphonso had not applied to the Pope for the kingdom of Naples only, but to obtain his sanction for the Congregation throughout the whole Church. "It

is but just," he added, "that a work of such magnitude should be universal."

In the course of these Memoirs it will be seen how much the devil would have gained, had the Congregation been confined to the kingdom of Naples, but God watched over it, and the snare was circumvented. Although all was in train, nothing was yet decreed, but Cardinal Orsini and the Duke de Sora exerted themselves to the utmost, and urged Mgr. Foglietti, secretary of the Congregation, to use the utmost promptitude. He promised, but different accidents interfered with the fulfilment of his promise. At length, towards the end of February Villani went to the Cardinal, who said to him, "Be comforted, this morning the Congregation has had one of the most difficult conferences;" but said Villani, "What cannot be done in the Congregation, might it not be done in the house of the Cardinal Prefect?" "True," said Orsini, "and I will go to him immediately, for I have something to say to him that concerns myself." "If you would succeed in your affairs," replied Villani, "begin by speaking of mine." "Depend on it," said the cardinal, "and since you say so, recommend my business to God in union with yours." That same day the decree of approbation was given, and the Cardinal with his own hand wrote to inform Villani of the news.

The father being presented to the Pope to thank him for his approbation, and ask a confirmation of it, his Holiness inquired for the

decree. Villani replied, that it was annexed to the rule. "That is what I wish to examine," said he. The following day he read the decree and the rule, and was quite satisfied with all. He was particularly pleased to find that the office of Rector Major and of the Consultors were perpetual. "It is this," said he, "that hinders parties and divisions so often met with among regulars." Seeing that the Congregation bore the name of the Holy Saviour, and reflecting that there was a Congregation established at Venice which already bore that name, he wished them to take the title of the Most Holy Redeemer instead. Several prelates happening to be in the antechamber, had the curiosity to read the rules, and all expressed themselves much pleased.

While Alphonso enjoyed at Ciorani the prospect of a favourable conclusion for his affairs at Rome, he was suddenly plunged in the greatest distress by hearing that the Pope had made him Perpetual Superior of the Congregation. He wrote to beseech them to obtain for him deliverance from so heavy a burden, exposing in the humblest terms his weakness and incapacity for sustaining such a charge. Villani wrote to him repeatedly on the necessity and propriety of his continuing rector. In one of his last letters on the subject, he says, "Since your Reverence is named Perpetual Rector, it is necessary to have patience and submit to the yoke. My father, speak no more on this subject; I believe you are bound by duty, by justice, and gratitude."

There was still another attempt made to crush the affair at Rome. A respectable Congregation at Naples beheld with a jealous eye the success of Alphonso and his Congregation, and sent with all haste one of its members to Rome to oppose him as much as possible. Father Villani looking on him as a friend, went to see him. He received him coldly, and remarked, "Yesterday evening, when I was with the Cardinal Porto Carrera, we opened by chance St. Thomas, and lighted on an article where it is questioned if it be expedient or not to approve a new order of religion; he concludes in the negative. The cardinal has marked the passage." He said nothing more, but this was sufficient to show the spirit with which he was animated towards the Congregation. The same institute sent another father for the same purpose, but he was of a different temper, and wrote back that he had come too late, for every thing was already concluded to the great satisfaction of both Pope and Cardinals.

If the author of evil could not hinder the Holy Father from giving his approbation, he tried at least to paralyse it. We have already seen that the Sacred Congregation approved the rules and the institute, and had charged Cardinal Passioci with the minute of the brief. The Abbe Fiori, to whom he had confided the arrangement of the minutes, having been gained by the friends of the envoy already mentioned, wrote, "Regula et non Institutum." They spoke of it to the Cardinal Passioci, who called the

Abbe and pointed it out to him; he coolly replied that it was the custom of the Holy See to approve the rule before approving of the institute, and that it was thus they had done with the Passionists. The cardinal had the decree given to the Pope, who seeing the ruse of the Abbe was very indignant, and taking the pen into his own hand, wrote "Regula et Institutum," so that, to the confusion of the malevolent, Alphonso had the satisfaction of receiving from Rome, on the 25th February, 1749, the confirmation of the rule and of the institute. So great a favour obtained in such a short time surprised every body. Humanly speaking they owed it in a great measure to Cardinal Orsini, who, full of admiration for Alphonso, took every means in his power to further the measure.

All being finished, Father Villani went to take leave of the Pope, and ask his paternal benediction for Alphonso, himself, and all the Congregation; he again received a great many graces and privileges. The lay-brother Francis was also admitted, when his Holiness asked him what he desired for himself, and said smiling, "I give my blessing to you, your father, your mother, and all your relations," giving him at the same time a great number of indulgences to distribute to his friends.

Any one may imagine the anxiety of Alphonso to hear of the termination of this important affair. Moments appeared ages, and every one redoubled his prayers and mortifications. When the last letter came, the expectation of which

made every one fear, Alphonso did not open it in his usual manner, but gradually unfolded it, and read one after another the letters of the first word. The word was "Gloria," and he immediately understood the good news. He continued reading, "Gloria Patri, &c. The Congregation is approved," and bursting into tears of joy he flung himself with his face to the earth, all the others present following his example. After having in this humble posture thanked God for His mercies, they rung the bell of the community, when all proceeding to the church the Te Deum was chanted, after which Alphonso made a prayer on these words, "Visita, Domine, vineam-istam, et perfice eam quam plantavit dextera tua," exhorting all to correspond to so great a grace by redoubled fervour in the exact observance of the rule, and in love towards Jesus Christ and His holy Mother Mary.

The sentiments of persons in authority at Rome differed on certain points regarding the rule. Some censured, others admired. Several thought that in order to consolidate the Congregation a fourth vow should have been added for the older members, according to what is practised among the Jesuits. Father Villani spoke to Mgr. Pirelli on the subject, but this Camaldolese prelate replied, "What an inconsiderate proposal! would to God that all religious orders had this open door! How many disorders would thus be prevented! you have this door open, and would you close it!" Some others objected to the community life, but a canon of eminence de-

fended it by saying, "What do people mean who hold such an opinion? the good of the community life is inappreciable; where there is none, every one works for himself and not for the community."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE approbation of the institute made a great noise at Rome; they spoke of nothing but the new Congregation of Missionaries approved by the Pope, of the fervour which reigned among them, and the great good they did. They were so highly thought of, that a great number of subjects, as distinguished for their virtue as for their science, applied to be admitted into the order. Two curates renounced their benefices and quitted Rome for Ciorani.

About the same time the Abbot mentioned before, as having been very useful in obtaining the approbation of the rules, was also caught by the holy life of Alphonso and his Congregation, and wished to be admitted among them. He was a man of great merit, profoundly versed in science divine and human. Alphonso had made it a rule never to admit into his Congregation any regular, nor any one who had ever lived in community, however short the time might have been; but in consideration of the distinguished merit of this Abbot, and the services he had rendered to the Congregation, he made no diffi-

culty in receiving him. The Pope by a brief agreed to and even encouraged this determination, and the Abbot, after having with the consent of Alphonso made the vows prescribed by the rule to Cardinal Orsini at the feet of St. Peter in the Vatican, laid aside his insignia, took the habit, and departed for Ciorani. This resolution of the Abbot made a great sensation at Rome. His example incited the Abbot del Pozzi himself, General of the Fathers of St. Basil, to make a similar application; but while matters were in train for his entering the Congregation, he was called from this world to enter into his eternal rest.

When it became known at Naples that the Congregation was confirmed by the Pope, a great many excellent young men and distinguished priests presented themselves for admission. Among others were Father John Bezzi, an eminently learned and pious priest, Don Charles Gazano, and Father Francis Pentimulli. The prince of Castellaneta, Don Matthcas Merobulla of Arragon, renewed his solicitations to be admitted, but Alphonso believed himself bound to refuse. Father Mandarini again began to solicit a reunion, which was seconded by the fathers of the four houses he had established, who all declared themselves ready to submit to Alphonso as their superior. He was touched by their entreaties, yet still, supported by the unanimous opinion of the fathers of his own Congregation, he refused. Upon this several of the most talented and pious in Mandarini's institute requested individually to be received, but foreseeing how much this would

weaken Mandarini's Congregation he would not consent.

In the month of October in the same year he held his first general chapter. All the members of the Congregation assisted, and there remained only the lay-brothers to keep the houses. At the opening of the chapter Alphonso invited all the members, through F. Cafaro, who opened the meeting, to accept the rules, and to proceed to a formal election to all the offices in general. That the suffrages might be entirely free, he urged that each one should first divest himself of the office he held. All obeyed, and although the Pope had confirmed him in the perpetual rectorship, he was the first to give the example. Kneeling in the midst of the chapter he laid down his authority, humbling himself before them, and asking pardon for all that was amiss in his past conduct. This act drew tears from the eyes of all present, and each following his example was eager to divest himself of all authority. Afterwards, that they might recommend the matter to God, and reflect on the vote they were about to give, Alphonso suggested that they all should make a retreat of three days, and above all he insisted that in electing the Rector Major, they should vote for him whom before God they thought best qualified to fill the office; in short he neglected no means for exempting himself of the burden.

The Father Abbot was the soul of the chapter, because he was well accustomed to such things. After each had given up his charge,

he was named president of the chapter. The rules were read, and all joyfully accepted them. All the student clerks assisted with the priests at this assembly. They renewed the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, with the oath of persevering in the Congregation until death. After having finished the three days' retreat, all the fathers met in chapter and proceeded to the nomination of the Rector Major, and at the first scrutiny Alphonso was unanimously elected Perpetual Rector Major. He adored the judgment of God, and thanked the assembly who deigned thus to honour him, and submitting to the Divine Will he again took up the heavy burden. After the election of the Rector Major they proceeded to the others. F. Villani was elected Consultor and Monitor. As Consultors they elected equally the Fathers Sportelli, Rossi, and Mazzini, with the Father Abbot. F. Francis Musgotta, although newly admitted into the Congregation, was, in consideration of his known merit, elected Procurator General.

In this chapter they determined to regulate the studies in the noviciate. They regulated the teaching of belles-lettres, and determined on the authors to be followed in philosophy. They adopted principally St. Thomas, and made other arrangements for sacred and profane studies. But if Alphonso felt a great consolation in seeing his Congregation rich in virtuous young men, his heart was saddened at the temporal poverty in which they were plunged. But the God in whom he trusted remembered him, and came to

his succour at the moment when he least expected.

The young students some months before had been walking in the grounds of the house at Pagani, when some gentlemen met with them, and from thence formed a very favourable judgment of the institute. To give Alphonso a testimony of their affection, they earnestly requested during the sitting of the chapter, that the Studenda should be established in the house of Pagani, promising that if the Congregation could not support the expense, they would willingly contribute themselves. All subscribed certain annual sums, and Dominic de Mayo, the dean, signalized himself among them by his generosity. The bishop contributed largely, taking the greatest interest in the education of the students.

The chapter finished by appointing the Father Abbot Professor of Philosophy and Theology, for which offices his vast erudition rendered him eminently qualified. They elected also Father Jerome Ferrare Professor of Humanity and Rhetoric, for which he was prepared by having taught them successfully during twenty years in the Seminary of Conza. Many other regulations were made, the object of which was to maintain holy poverty and the community life.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

When all was regulated for the interior of the Congregation, Alphonso recommenced in the autumn his course of missions. At the opening of the Jubilee in 1750, Mgr. de Novelles invited him to give a mission at Sarno. The sight of this holy man clad in an old mantle mended in a thousand places, with a cassock in the same condition, produced an effect equal to that of a sermon in the sentiments of penitence it inspired. All in Sarno knew his noble birth, and they were confounded to see him clad like a poor mendicant.

He preached in another manner not less edifying. His beard had been clipped with scissors the previous evening, and its inequalities were quite in keeping with his mantle and cassock. The bishop wishing to try him said laughingly, "Notwithstanding our wish to be economical a few pence are necessary to have you shaved, so I will pay for you myself;" he at the same time made a sign to a servant to call a barber. Alphonso said nothing, and when the barber came he presented himself to be shaved with the most perfect indifference, although it was eighteen years since a razor had touched his chin. This prompt obedience edified both the bishop and the whole town of Sarno, and the high idea they had of his sanctity increased more and more.

God showered abundant graces on this mission.

The town was plunged in deplorable wickedness, but soon every one talked with admiration of the extraordinary and sudden change produced. A great number of bravos by profession placed in the hands of the missionaries their daggers, their pistols, and bayonets, and from that moment embraced a peaceful and pious life. Many young girls abandoned the arrangements that had been made for their marriage, and vowed themselves the spouses of Jesus Christ. The virtue of chastity was the most precious pearl that adorned the heart of Alphonso, and he knew well how to introduce it into the hearts of others. The clergy profited as much as others, and not a few among them, touched by grace, left all and entered the Congregation. Don Stephen Liguori was among the number.

Piety succeeded to disorder; the sacraments were frequented, and every evening crowds came to the Church to visit the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is on record, that for ten years after this the taverns were quite deserted. When he had finished the mission in this town, accompanied by fourteen missionaries, he commenced preaching throughout the diocese. Everywhere grace triumphed, sin was banished, and piety re-established.

Although the Pouille was cultivated by the Fathers of the Congregation, yet the Bishop, Mgr. Busti, desired much to see Alphonso himself, wishing to have the consolation of hearing him preach in the cathedral. He went to Melfi at his request, where his sermons produced ad-

mirable fruit. Without speaking of many gentlemen whose immoral lives were reformed, there was one in particular, who, not content with a partial reformation, generously renounced fortune and friends, and came into the Congregation as a lay-brother. The clergy also had their brilliant conversions. There lived at Malfi a canon deeply skilled in canon law and jurisprudence, but as his whole employment was to shine in the saloons, he was an ecclesiastic by name only. He heard Alphonso preach, and being moved to repentance, changed his life, and renounced his profession of advocate, except in defence of the widow and the orphan. He embraced courageously a poor and mortified life, and full of the Spirit of God sought henceforth only to save souls.

During his sojourn at Malfi, Alphonso learned the happy passage to heaven of F. Cesar Sportelli, his first companion in the Congregation. This loss was a heavy blow to him, although he had long expected it, Sportelli having had a stroke of apoplexy two years before. But he had cause to rejoice, because of the circumstances attending his death. A month previously he had foretold the day and the hour of his decease, while some were performing their devotional exercises in the church; and when one of the Fathers set out to join Alphonso on the mission, Sportelli said to him, "Kiss the hands of our rector for me, and say to him, that when he shall receive at Malfi the news of my death, he must recommend my soul to Jesus

Christ." He died in the odour of sanctity, and God has glorified him by many miracles. Six months after his death, when they opened the coffin in presence of the ecclesiastical judges, the body was found uncorrupted, and blood was drawn from the veins.

In the course of his missions in this diocese he visited Ripacandida, where there was a convent of Carmelite nuns, strict observers of their rule, and a subject of great edification to all who knew them. He gave them a retreat, from which he drew not less profit than he gave, benefiting by their conversation as they benefited from his instructions. He modified however their bodily austerities, in which he wished them to use more discretion, and established some relaxation both for the body and the mind. He was full of admiration for the sanctity which reigned in the monastery. "I did not believe," he said, "that I should have found on this rock such a beautiful flower."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Having returned to Ciorani his indefatigable zeal made it easy for him to profit by the slightest leisure. He finished and published in the course of this year, 1750, his precious work entitled "The Glories of Mary." He burned with desire to extend in all directions the glory of Jesus Christ, and to subjugate all hearts to Him; but

his zeal was also ardent to glorify Mary and that she should be loved of all. This work was the fruit of years in which he had employed himself to choose from among the works of holy fathers and theologians the most conclusive proofs in favour of the prerogatives of Mary, and the fittest to engage the faithful to devote themselves to her service. "Although I have read many books," he said, "which treat of the glories of Mary, I have remarked that they were either too confined or too voluminous, or at least written with a different purpose from mine. For this reason I have resolved to form a collection of the most beautiful and striking passages from the holy fathers and theologians, to give to pious souls at little expense and trouble a book which may fill them with love to the virgin Mother of God. Preachers also may find in this book matter which may aid them in spreading devotion towards Mary."

In this work Alphonso attacked the book of the celebrated Louis Anthony Musatori, for having shown himself too reserved in exalting the praises of the Virgin. Musatori had attempted to combat the proposition, that "all the benefits of God pass through the hands of Mary," pretending that expressions such as these, which designate the power of the holy Mother of God, are hyperboles and exaggerations, which have escaped some saints in the excess of their fervour, and which do not belong to a sane theology. Alphonso made it clear that there is the mediation of justice by merit, which is that of Jesus Christ, and the mediation of grace by prayer, which is that

of the Blessed Virgin; that if Jesus Christ is the only mediator of justice, who obtains salvation for us by His merits, Mary is the mediatrix of grace, because she prays and obtains all by the merits of Jesus Christ. "Musatori," said Alphonso, "has shown himself too reserved in granting to Mary this prerogative, which so many holy fathers and doctors of the Church have attributed to her, not only as being useful to us, but necessary also." His work is divided into two parts, the first being a commentary on the Salve Regina, in which he exalts the glories of the holy Virgin, and the innumerable graces she obtains for her servants; the second part contains nine discourses on the principal feasts of the Virgin, and reflections on her sorrows. He speaks there particularly of her virtues, and indicates different devotions that may be practised in her honour with great advantage.

Alphonso dedicated this work to Jesus Christ. "I know not," he says, "to whom I can better dedicate this work than to Thee, who so ardently desirest the glory of Thy holy Mother. Recompense me by kindling in my heart the love which I desire to communicate to the hearts of all who read this book." The applause with which the book was received or the number of editions through which it has gone, is scarcely to be credited.

The contradictions and ill-usage which so many of the young men had to endure who joined the Congregation, induced Alphonso to write a small work entitled, "Advice regarding a Religious Vo-

cation." He showed in this work that a divine vocation is not to be subjected to the will of relations, and that when God calls us we must obey Him. He showed the excellence of the religious state, which is the most certain way of obtaining salvation. He pointed out the advantages to be found in religion, and the means of preserving our vocation; and then gave five meditations for the use of those whom God called to this state. He showed them the recompenses reserved for those who corresponded to their vocation, and the chastisements which never failed to follow those who resisted the call of the Lord. Having compassion for young novices, and being desirous to help them in their temptations to return into the world, he published a little work called "Advice to Novices, to aid them in persevering in their vocation." This book discovered the numerous deceits, illusions, and snares by which the devil tried to make them return to the world, giving them at the same time the means most proper for escaping them and remaining faithful to God.

In these two works Alphonso had not only in view the young people of his own Congregation, but of all who were called to a religious life, and lived in convents where discipline was in vigour. He presented it to all the noviciates in Naples, and it was everywhere favourably received. "If," said he, "I can hinder one vocation from being lost, the gain is not little."

He had much to suffer from the ignorance of many who boasted that they knew philosophy and

theology, and yet hardly knew how to write their own language. He would assist those of the Congregation and others who had need, and wrote in form of a manual a little treatise on the most essential rules of grammar. He exposed briefly but clearly the four principal rules of arithmetic, for the use of the lay-brothers. His charity was industrious, and knew how to aid all.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Alphonso was enjoying the greatest happiness in seeing his Congregation approved by the Pope, and each day making new progress, when a sad reverse came to change into bitterness his joy and consolation. The Father Abbot was scarcely settled at Ciorani, when by the brilliancy of his talents he had gained the admiration of all the students, and their hearts also by his edifying conduct. Although newly entered into the Congregation, he was looked on as a veteran well qualified to instruct and guide the young soldiers of Christ. All looked upon him as a precious conquest, and conceived the brightest hopes from his influence over the students.

The opening of the Studenda at Pagani took place under the happiest auspices; all the young clerks were distinguished as students, and those of inferior talents were left at Ciorani. The students at Pagani were twelve in number. Besides philosophy, they were taught the elements of sacred and profane history, and studied lan-

guages besides. Every fortnight, or at least once a month, they had public theses in the chapel, and strange priests and religious of different orders came to hold arguments with them on philosophical questions. The renown of the Abbot and the talents of the scholars attracted a great concourse of people to the house. The Fathers in general rejoiced in this success, but Alphonso feared that the pre-eminence of belles-lettres would hurt the spiritual advancement of the young people. He wished them to acquire knowledge, but not vanity, and, above all, to advance in the science of the saints.

The commencement with the Abbot was good, but the consequences were not so; extremes are always to be feared. He was a man of superior talent certainly, but he would extend this superiority beyond its proper limits; habituated to command, he could not humble himself to obey. The rule became a restraint for him, his haughty character would not bend to it, he would sleep when he ought to wake, and wake when he should sleep. The want of liberty preyed upon his mind. Accustomed for so many years to the rules of his own institute, as soon as the first fervour was over he accommodated himself with difficulty to new rules; and in his conversations with the young men, sometimes would disapprove of one thing, sometimes would modify another, and with regard to certain practices of devotion he could not even suffer them. To kiss the feet of a member of the commu-

nity on certain days, to eat kneeling or sitting on the ground, to extend the arms for a certain time in the form of a cross, all this in his opinion were but grimaces which produced no effect.

These customs had been established spontaneously in the Congregation, and Alphonso with the elder Fathers had never ceased to practise them. On his first arrival at Ciorani, the Abbot had practised them himself; he did not then regard them as mummeries, but as practices useful for promoting humility. F. Mazzini being informed by the students of the conduct of their prefect, believed he ought to give him a friendly warning, but the Abbot received it with a very bad grace, and ceased not to spread maxims contrary to a religious community. He would not that when any one remarked a fault in another, he should go and inform the superior, that he as a common father might remedy the evil. His wish was that this should always be preceded by fraternal correction, without reflecting that this correction, being neglected, the report afterwards made to the rector was an occasion of aversion and enmity. On this subject he had a keen altercation with Mazzini, coming with St. Thomas and other authors in his hand, with which he attempted to fortify his opinion. When Alphonso heard at Ciorani this sad news, his heart was oppressed. He advised Mazzini to be prudent, and wrote at the same time to the Abbot, representing to him the great evil that might result from diversity of opinion in a newborn institute; but seeing that this only embit-

tered him against Mazzini, he withdrew the latter from Nocera, although with great regret, and sent him to Caposile. Notwithstanding, things did not take a better turn; on the contrary, the Abbot troubled the minds of the students to such an extent, that they formed themselves into two opposite parties, and Alphonso heard of these proceedings from one of the young men whose conscience became alarmed, and urged him to disclose all to the Rector Major. When he saw that the evil was growing worse, he summoned the Abbot to Ciorani; this occurred in the month of September, 1750, and as they were giving a retreat to the ordinandi, he gave him the charge of it, that he might not think of returning to Pagani. The Abbot did not like this, and showed his discontent in a thousand ways, when Alphonso said to him very firmly, "Either you must obey, or you are free to return to your own order." The Abbot passed the night in consideration, and then agreed to give the Exercises, but declared his intention of leaving the Congregation.

This affair alarmed the whole house. They had the highest esteem for the Abbot, looking upon him as one who had protected them most at Rome, and as his misconduct was still a secret at Ciorani, every one suffered at seeing him vexed. He, however, entered into himself and became humble; this was precisely the result Alphonso wished for. The Fathers Villani and Cafaro, who were giving a mission in a neighbouring village, interceded for him, and as Alphonso wished not to disgrace him, and believed

he recognised his fault, he readily sent him back again to Nocera. Peace seemed re-established, but it was only a truce. The Abbot recommenced his instructions, and among the students one was of Paul, another of Apollos. Not to compromise everything, Alphonso tried a new expedient. He recalled the Abbot to Ciorani. "Every Congregation," said he, "has an asylum at Rome, why should not we try to establish an hospice there?" The proposal rather pleased the Abbot and the Fathers who were present, and it was agreed to send him with another Father. By this means Alphonso hoped to save the honour of the Abbot, and at the same time withdraw him from the students.

But the devil had too much interest in continuing the evil he had begun to allow the matter to be settled so quietly. The Abbot beginning to perceive the reason why Alphonso had taken this resolution, was exceedingly displeased, and yielding to the temptation he meditated the ruin of the young students altogether. Showing them the institute under a disadvantageous aspect, he proposed to them to join with him and go to Rome, where they would form a new institute on a footing altogether different. Four of these young men, the flower of the whole, determined to turn their backs on the Congregation and follow this new founder. Having long been filled with the desire of going to preach to the heathen, they immediately erected themselves into as many apostles for the Mogul, Paraguay, or China.

Alphonso was ignorant of this plot, and was engaged in arranging all things for the journey of the Abbot, but that God who protected the Congregation, would show how he succoured him who governed it. The Abbot was to depart for Naples on the 15th of October, 1750; all was going well; he had already taken leave of his friends, and on the 14th Alphonso had made the twelve students come to Ciorani. They arrived in the morning; after the evening meditation, he assembled a council, and all at once proposed the expulsion of the Father Abbot. All were confounded at the proposal, and as they had fixed before that he should be sent to Rome, they demanded why this agreement should not be adhered to. Some pretended that they could not expel a Consultor General without convoking all the others to give their vote. Alphonso argued that the rule exacted the presence of the consultor to give counsel but not to decide; but they objected to him, that that could not apply to Consultors General, for in case one of them should not be of the same opinion as the Rector Major, he could always disembarrass himself by expelling that one from the Congregation. In short, the dispute lasted until evening prayers, Alphonso sustaining his opinion in spite of all opposition.

The next day they changed their opinion when the four young men whom the Abbot had perverted, presented themselves to Alphonso with staves in their hands and mantles under their arms, demanding dispensation from the four vows they had made. The consultors were confound-

ed at the sight, they changed their language, and were filled with admiration for the conduct of Alphonso, and the care God evidently took of the Congregation. The young clerks became very audacious, and losing all respect insisted on obtaining a dispensation. Alphonso threw himself at their feet, the tears gushing from his eyes as he strove to convince them of the snare into which they were falling. No father could have interested himself more than he did; but they ceased not to repeat in the most impudent manner, "We will go away." When he saw how obstinate they were he proposed to them to make a retreat for eight days, and after that to make their decision; but all was useless, and instigated by the devil they turned their back on him, and with an air of contempt without having obtained their dispensation, they all four departed for Nocera.

There was one circumstance which showed in a striking manner the protection God granted to Alphonso. The Abbot, in order to justify himself, had previously drawn up a memorial signed by these four young men, and addressed to the Pope, in which they stated a thousand lies against Alphonso and the Congregation, which they said was full of grave disorders. His plan was, after his arrival at Rome, to pretend to have received this memorial, and intended to communicate it to persons of influence, and afterwards to present it to the Pope. Thus he flattered himself he should not only obtain a dispensation from their vows for the clerks, but that his Holiness

would advise them to enter the institute he proposed to form. Such was the plan he had conceived, but he soon found himself entangled by his own malice. The young men could not support the agitation of their conscience, nor wait until the Abbot sent them a dispensation from their vows from Rome; although they were ignorant of the determination of Alphonso, their own impatience unmasked them, and they neglected the arrangements they had made with the Abbot.

But this was not all; another proof was found of the Abbot's perfidy. That same morning Alphonso had sent an order to F. Fiocchi, Rector at Nocera, to inform the Abbot, in whatever spot he might be found, that he was no longer a member of the Congregation. The Abbot had gone to take leave of Mgr. Volpi, and F. Fiocchi followed him and told him the decision that had been made. The guilty one had not the presence of mind to return to the house and remove his papers, and the memorial just alluded to was found in his table drawer. Providence had guided the order given by Alphonso, "in whatever spot he may be found;" for had the Abbot been in the house at the moment of his expulsion, he would have carried the memorial away with him.

Such were the consequences of the conduct of a subject who had repaid with ingratitude the high estimation in which he had been held. Always under the influence of a bad spirit, he committed a crime at Naples not less grievous than the preceding. There was in the College of the

Holy Family a young priest, brother of one of the four clerks. He burned with desire to give missions in China, and was the best of all F. Faligata's subjects. The Abbot accompanied by the four clerks went to see him; he told him he had already established at Rome his new Congregation, and that the Pope had himself designated the four young students as so many apostles destined to gain the palm of martyrdom among the infidels. Nothing more was necessary to seduce this young man and make him declare he would accompany them. The Father Abbot set out alone for Rome, and the five young victims were abandoned without their having the least suspicion of it.

These events caused a painful impression everywhere, even in the house of the religious order to which the Abbot belonged. One of the most respectable fathers of that order, since general, paid a visit of condolence to Alphonso on the occasion, who, without complaining of what had happened, said calmly, "The Father Abbot has made us weep to-day; a time will come when he will make you weep also." The prophecy was fulfilled a few years later, when the Abbot troubled the whole order, by dividing the abbeys of the kingdom of Naples from those of the Pontifical States, and making himself be declared by the Pope Perpetual Abbot in Rome, and Commissary General for life to the abbeys in the Pontifical States, causing many other annoyances to the convents in both kingdoms.

Such were the events which happened at Ci-

orani and Nocera in the month of October, 1750. Alphonso attributed the discovery of the plot to the special protection of the glorious Theresa, for all happened between the first and second vespers of the feast of that saint. Since that time the Congregation have taken St. Theresa for one of its principal patrons, and have had the greatest devotion to her.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Alphonso ceased not to mourn over the wanderings of these four young students, and the trouble into which it had plunged the Congregation. His greatest consolation was to see a young man whom God had called to live in the Congregation, cheerfully sacrificing fortune and friends to follow the voice of his Redeemer; but he experienced proportionable pain when any one turned his back upon God and reentered the world. His affliction was however partly tempered by the return of one of these young men a few days after, who threw himself at his feet. Sometime after a second followed his example. He received them both as a tender father, and ever afterwards showed them a special affection.

Several of the advices Alphonso gave to the young clerks on this occasion, are still on record. Speaking of those who without a just cause lose

their vocation, he said, "The Lord chastises with rigour even in this life those who turn their back upon God without considering their vocation. They carry about with them a remorse of conscience which torments them until death. I say it, and I will always repeat it, that many are now in hell from having lost their vocation. When one link in the chain of grace is broken, all is lost."

The one means above all which he gave to the students to surmount temptations against their vocation, was to open their consciences immediately to their spiritual superior. "My dear brethren," he said on this occasion, "I would earnestly recommend you not to keep your conscience closed, for if these unfortunates who have gone out from us had manifested the state of their souls to their superiors, they would not now be where they are. Had they declared themselves then, not to any one indifferently, but to him who holds towards us the place of God, and cannot deceive us, this had not happened."

Having been told that the poverty of the Congregation was a motive for which the young men had abandoned it, "O my God!" he exclaimed, while the tears ran from his eyes, "where then is love for the poverty of Jesus Christ? If I knew the Congregation was rich and had as large an income as others have, I would fear much; it would be to me a sign that God would reward us in this life, and not in heaven, for the little we are doing for Him here."

Touched with compassion for the misery of

the young men who had gone, and to provide against the others being tempted, he said, "During a temptation, my dear brethren, never take a resolution, whatever the case may be, and however holy it may appear, but go instantly and discover it to the superior. When the temptation is upon us, we do not recognize that it comes from the devil. He conceals himself under a veil, and puts before our eyes treacherous spectacles, making us see things not as they are in themselves, but according to our own passions. If we would avoid the snare, we should instantly recommend ourselves to God, and abandon ourselves into His hands. This is difficult in the time of temptation, very difficult indeed; and for this reason, when we are in calm, we ought incessantly to offer ourselves to God in prayer, and throw ourselves blindly into his arms. The strongest temptations can never shake a soul that offers herself entirely to God."

Alphonso rejoiced to see the young people progress in the sciences; but he would not permit them to apply to them with excessive solicitude. "Sapere, et Sapere ad Sobrietatem." He was better satisfied with mediocrity than superiority of talent in the Congregation. The Abbot had introduced among the students a forced application to study, but all this afflicted Alphonso, and he could not suffer it. "I am not sorry," he said, after the departure of the Abbot, "when I see you retrench your studies and give more time to prayer. We have been called to succour poor destitute souls in the country, for this

reason we have more need of sanctity than of science. If we are not holy we are exposed to the peril of falling into a thousand imperfections and a thousand impatiences with these sort of people. I repeat to you once more, if to give to spirituality you retrench something from your studies, far from being sorry, I shall on the contrary experience great consolation."

As after a defeat soldiers are cast down and timid, so after this deplorable accident a general discouragement was felt throughout the Congregation. To reanimate them, and above all to reanimate the young, Alphonso wrote to all the houses the following circular:

"To my brethren of the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer. Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Theresa.

"My very dear Brethren, you know that I am not afflicted when I hear of some one among my brethren being called to another life. I am touched by it, because I am a creature of flesh and blood; but I am comforted because he has died in a Congregation of which I am certain all the members will be saved. Neither am I afflicted when one among us, because of their faults, ceases to be a member of the Congregation; I am even consoled by seeing that we are delivered from a sickly sheep that might have infected others. Far less am I afflicted because of persecutions; on the contrary they inspire me with courage, because if we conduct ourselves well, we are certain God will not abandon us. But that which alarms me is, to learn that there

is among us some one who is vicious, who is negligent in obeying, and who pays little regard to the rule.

"My brethren, you know it, some who have been with us, are now out of the Congregation. What will their end be? I cannot tell. But of this I am certain, they will lead a life of continued misfortune, they will live in trouble, and die without peace, for they have abandoned their vocation. They have left us that they may live more happily and contentedly, but the thought that they have abandoned God to live according to their own caprice will never leave them one day of rest. They will practise with difficulty the exercise of prayer, because in prayer they will be torn by remorse of conscience for having left God, and thus they will abandon prayer, and then God knows where they will end.

"I beseech you to avoid faults of deliberation, and above all, those faults for which you have been reprimanded.

"If correction leads the sinner to amend, the fault will be nothing, but when he will not amend, the devil employs every artifice to make him lose his vocation: it is by this means he has already caused the loss of many others.

"By the grace of God, wherever we go on mission we perform wonders, and people say they have never had a mission such as ours. And why? because we go by obedience, we go in poverty, we preach Christ crucified, and each one is attentive to acquit himself of the charge imposed upon him. I have been deeply grieved

to learn that some among you when on mission have been desirous of obtaining the more honourable employments, such as preaching or instructing. But what fruit could he produce who preaches from pride? It is a thing which I have in horror. If this spirit of ambition enters the Congregation, the missions will do little good, or rather they will do none at all."

Toward the end of the autumn of 1750, notwithstanding the troubles that had happened in the Congregation, he continued to give missions in different quarters, chiefly in the diocese of Salerno. He afterwards went, invited by his spiritual son, Mgr. Innocent St. Severino, to Montemenuno, where he found the people in a deplorable state. Numbers of criminals came to him, touched by remorse, and were placed by him in the right way. The conversion of these malefactors was a subject of great consolation in the town, and still more in the neighbouring country.

About this time also he went to Avellano in the diocese of Mgr. Leone, to give a retreat to the people and the clerks. Great numbers of the clergy were reformed on this occasion, and those already good became more fervent. Scandals disappeared, and the reform was general among the inhabitants. An Archdeacon who was present wrote thus: "The devotedness of this servant of God, and his mortified life, covers us with confusion, and serves as a spur to animate us in doing well."

He had scarcely returned to Nocera when

his heart was pierced by a new sorrow, the departure of an ancient Father whom he loved much, and who was very useful in the missions. Offended by a reasonable and moderate correction which he had received from the Rector at Ciorani, he communicated to no person his temptation, and in his trouble he set off for Nocera, believing that Alphonso would give him satisfaction. But reflecting by the way on the inconsiderate step he had taken, and not feeling courage to present himself, in place of going to the convent he directed his steps towards his own house. All the efforts of Alphonso and others to induce him to return were unavailing. Such are the fruits of pride; when the heart refuses to be touched by grace, it becomes deaf to all others voices. The inconstancy of this Father made a great sensation in the Congregation. It happened on the 25th of July, 1751, and on the 27th Alphonso wrote the following circular to the different houses of the Congregation:

"To the Fathers and Brethren of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"My very dear Fathers and Brethren in Jesus Christ, I pray God that He may immediately chase from among us all those proud and haughty spirits who cannot brook a reprimand, not only from superiors, but also from equals and inferiors. I beseech the Lord to chase me, me the first of all, if ever I allow myself to be caught

by this spirit of pride. Behold F. N. whom this cursed spirit of pride has caused to leave the Congregation, presenting obstacles to the divine benedictions. He who refuses to be as potters-clay, to be trodden under the feet of all, let him fly, and let him fly immediately.

"The Lord will be better satisfied if there remain but two or three who are truly humble and mortified, than if there remained a thousand who were imperfect. What have we entered the Congregation for, if we will not submit to some contempt for the love of Jesus Christ? With what face shall we go among the people preaching humility, if we have so much horror for humiliations? But because we are all miserable creatures, I have a request to make to each of you, and that you may better remember what I now say, I impose it upon you by obedience, and that is, that every one daily in prayer or thanksgiving, beseech Jesus Christ contemned, to grant him the grace to suffer contempt without losing either peace or spiritual joy. Let those who have more fervour pray especially that he may be made to suffer contempt for love of Him. He who will not make this prayer, or who makes it without the desire of being heard, ought to fear being chased out of the Congregation for his pride, as others have been, in consequence of their pride.

"I would impress it also upon the heart of each one of you, never to speak evil of the conduct or any thing else of the superiors. The indiscreet zeal of some does far more harm than

good to the Congregation. Those who are truly zealous, when they remark some disorder or inobservance, let them tell it in secret to the Monitor of the house, who will give notice of it to the Rector Major, and if they find that he neglects to take notice of it, they will write to his Monitor. Let all give attention to what I say, otherwise they will cause me much pain, and force me afterwards to mortify them in a more sensible manner. Be attentive, my dear brethren, to take count of the least faults, because they are the little foxes the devil makes use of to devastate our mind, and render us incapable of being solicitous to preserve our vocation. Let us then, my dear brethren, sustain ourselves by prayer, and by continual prayer, otherwise we shall do nothing.

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa,

"Your very affectionate brother,

"ALPHONSUS MARY,

"Of the Most Holy Redeemer."

The apostolic courses of the year 1751, were not less happy in conversions. When the hot season was over, Mgr. Volpi requested Alphonso to give a retreat in the monastery of the Purity. The fervour that reigned among these nuns is well known, and this retreat only gave new aliment to souls already burning with love. He afterwards gave missions in different places, everywhere with the usual success, and hundreds of young women renounced the world and gave themselves to God.

After having given missions in the territory of Marcanelli, where he had first seen the light, he would pass through Naples on his return. He alighted at the door of the small hospice given to him by his brother Hercules, being an incommodious corner of his own house opposite the Church of the Virgins. When the people saw a man riding on a white ass, his beard neglected, and his clothes ragged and worn, they could not recognise him, but mistaking him for a vagabond they began hooting and ridiculing him. Alphonso took it all with great good humour, till a merchant calling out his name, made them understand he was the brother of Don Hercules.

It was evening when he arrived worn out with fatigue; he would not sup, but said to the lay-brother that he would lie down. Don Hercules came to visit him, but fearing to disturb his sleep, he resolved to return in the morning; but when he came, Alphonso was not yet risen; he returned after a while, and fearing some accident forced open his brother's door. He found him extended on his bed in a fainting fit, and eagerly ran to obtain help. The doctors ordered him to be undressed, and they found his body enveloped in sackcloth, which hindered him from breathing. They bled him, and then he began to come to himself. Seeing that he was discovered, he was ready to die with shame, and bitterly complained to the brother Fartaglioni for having permitted such a thing. Fatigued and weak though he was, he nevertheless consented to give a sermon to the

students at the Archiepiscopal Seminary, and visited several monasteries where he was invited, but at last, to put an end to the occupations with which they loaded him, he fled from Naples.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Alphonso in soliciting the approbation of his institute at Naples, did not obtain the same success he had met with at Rome; and at the very moment when he anticipated the sanction of two great powers, a new annoyance overtook him unexpectedly, which threatened ruin, and caused him great anxiety. The Canon Curate of Iliceto, had, as we have seen, declared the Most Holy Virgin Mary of Consolation heir of all his wealth, under the name of Alphonso and his missionaries. This was a great subject of conversation among the lawyers in the neighbourhood, who being ignorant of the object of this donation, set themselves to put an unfavourable construction upon it. It happened, that towards the end of January, 1751, the King, while hunting in the territory of Iliceto, happened to see the house of the missionaries, which is built upon an eminence, and asked one of his courtiers to whom it belonged. "It is the house of Father Liguori's missionaries," he replied, "and they have made a good hit there, having fallen heirs to no less than sixty-thousand ducats." The King was much struck by these words: "Ah!" said he, "these then

are just like the others; scarcely do they begin when they set themselves to acquire wealth." Deceived by what he had heard, and supposing that the other houses had also made similar acquisitions, the King felt indisposed against the Congregation; and all the court soon knew it, and every one talked of their ambition and the certainty of the order being suppressed. Persons were immediately dispatched to the Syndics in the different places where their houses were established, to inquire into their revenues, and the acquisitions they had made. A tempest so unexpected alarmed the whole Congregation. Alphonso, however, whose will was always united to the will of God, said to his brethren, "The Lord will make the Congregation prosper, not by the applauses and protection of princes, but by means of poverty and contempt, of misery and persecution; when have we ever seen the works of God begin in the midst of applause? When St. Ignatius was informed of a new persecution, a reverse, it was then that he was happy." Confiding in the integrity of his conscience, and not doubting the protection of the King, he went to Naples. The minister was too much prejudiced against the Congregation; everywhere they spoke of the wealth the missionaries had acquired. Alphonso had recourse to the protection of God, who never failed him, and tried to obtain mercy by increased mortifications, exhorting his brethren to join him in penance and prayer. He ordered the Psalm, "Qui habitat," to be recited in all the houses, and discipline to

be taken in common every Monday, in addition to those appointed by the rule. They multiplied their alms, and offered many masses.

In these critical circumstances, their affairs were the object of research to notaries and their subalterns. They ascertained the little acquisitions that had been made, while the Fathers urged them to be sincere in their reports to the King. His Majesty at the same time, who could not doubt the integrity of Alphonso, was not slow to reflect on the improbability of his suspicions, and said to the Marquis Brancone, that Alphonso himself should arrange an account of the revenues of the different houses. Alphonso declared that the house of Iliceto, had in all a yearly rent of three hundred ducats, and that the deductions made in consequence of different charges upon it reduced it to much less. That the houses of Ciorani and Caposile had each about five hundred ducats of revenue; but that Nocera had only the bare walls, and a small bit of garden ground. The reports made by the local authorities attributed much less to each house than Alphonso had given in, and his great sincerity confirmed the King more and more in the high opinion he had of him.

Even when the calumny was exposed, Alphonso could not get rid of uneasiness; his position became very critical; the very existence of the new Congregation had been questioned, and the ministers were asking, whether or not it should be suppressed. All were inclined to abolish it; they thought the kingdom had already more than

sufficient religious establishments, and rather than consent to the establishment of new, they thought of diminishing those already in existence. Two opposing sentiments divided the heart of the King; he would not burden the state, and he would not go against public opinion; but convinced of the spiritual wants of his people, and the great good done by Alphonso and his missionaries, he could not resolve to reject them. Alphonso was without any human support, but he did not lose courage; he said that the souls of the blessed would defend his cause, and he abandoned the interests of his Congregation to the piety of the King and the protection of Providence. He quitted Naples and withdrew to Nocera, to prepare for the missions of autumn and winter. Solicited by the Archbishop of Salerno, he preached penitence in his diocese with his accustomed success. After Easter, 1752, he went to Gragnano at the desire of Mgr. Geannini, accompanied by twenty-two missionaries. Aided by grace, prodigies were performed, particularly among the malefactors, many of whom were seen depositing their daggers and pistols at the feet of the Blessed Virgin. Among these was a celebrated bandit called Clement Servillo. When they went in procession to erect a Calvary Alphonso gave him a cross to carry; at the sight of this man with the cross on his shoulders, the people shed tears of joy, but Clement wept most: "You weep," he said, "but it is I who should weep, I who bear upon my shoulders the whole weight of

Calvary," alluding to the heavy burden of the grievous sins he had committed.

In the course of these missions, Alphonso, considering that the hearts of Kings are in the hands of the Lord, animated himself with new courage, and wrote to the Marquis Brancone to intercede with the King. The Marquis embraced every opportunity of speaking to his Majesty, and at length wrote to Alphonso, that matters were so far advanced he should come to Naples himself, which he accordingly did as soon as the missions were finished.

He presented himself to the King, told him how for nineteen years he and his companions had traversed the kingdom, visiting the most remote and destitute villages and hamlets, distributing the bread of life; he told him of thousands converted in his own royal domains of the Pouille; that each year they had given in the space of nine months more than forty missions; that the Archbishops of Conza and Salerno, the Bishops of Boveni and Nocera, seeing the good produced by these missions, had with the royal approbation established a house of missionaries in their respective dioceses. He represented to him that the Pope, informed of what had been done, approved the institute for the whole Church. But that it was not sufficient to be approved by the Pope, it was also necessary that the approbation of the Sovereign should be given, to insure the future existence of so great a work. "It is true," said Alphonso in finishing his speech, "that I am unworthy of presiding over

this work, but I burn with love for the souls of men; I desire the happiness of your kingdom; I wish to consecrate the pains of my life to the glory of Jesus Christ. I see with affliction so many unfortunates deprived of the merits of the blood of a Saviour shed for all men. I would go with my companions to open the paths of happiness to those who are destitute of health:" saying these words, he placed in the hands of the King the Rules of the Congregation.

Reflecting afterwards, that the power of acquiring riches was the sole obstacle that the minister could oppose to the accomplishment of his desires, he opened his heart to the King, showing him how very far he was from wishing his Congregation to become rich. "I am persuaded," he said, "that wherever abundance reigns, the labourer will abandon the axe and the spade, and seek only repose. I would not wish that opulence should reign in my Congregation. I seek only to procure a modest livelihood, according to the intention of the Pope, and I beseech your Majesty to establish a fixed revenue, beyond which we may not go."

Not content with the efforts he made to gain the King, he had also recourse to the intervention of the Queen, which he managed by means of the celebrated Father Francis Pipi the Jesuit, and Mother Mary Angela of Divine Love, who had been his penitent in the world, but was now Superior of a Carmelite convent she had founded at Caporea. The Queen often frequented this holy retreat, and had much affection for its holy

inhabitants. Alphonso wrote to her to intercede for him with her Majesty.

In the midst of the difficult affairs which detained him at Naples he did not forget the work to which he had devoted his life. His sojourn in that capital was a continual mission. He gave a retreat in the Church of the Pilgrims; the confessionals were besieged by crowds of penitents, who, old in sin, had long ceased to frequent the sacraments; hundreds of infidels abjured their errors. He also often preached at the Chinese College, and many convents profited by his labours.

In spite of these numerous occupations he never lost sight of the affairs of his Congregation: he hoped and he feared, but he had more reason to fear than to hope. Although he hoped much from the piety of the King, yet he was opposed by political interests. When the negociations approached a close he had many masses said, and multiplied penance, to force, as it were, the benedictions of Heaven. He made special vows to the souls in purgatory, to St. Joseph, and St. Theresa, and wrote to many monasteries beseeching prayers and novenas.

While all had recourse to God in prayer, Alphonso did not neglect human means. Although sick and worn out with fatigue, he visited the ministers to urge upon them the importance of this affair in promoting the salvation of multitudes of people. He spoke to them with tears, but his illustrious birth and his extraordinary merits were neither of them sufficient to protect

them from insult. They rejected him with unpitying bitterness. One minister in particular treated him with the utmost rudeness, he gave him audience standing, and after listening with marked incivility to what he said, almost turned him out of doors. "Do not talk nonsense to me," he said; "away with you, and tell your stories to some old woman." Alphonso bowed his head and said nothing. But on another occasion he was really shocked. He had said to one of the ministry, "My Lord, I recommend to you the cause of Jesus Christ," who replied in the most contemptuous manner, "Jesus Christ has no cause in the royal chamber." It seemed as if in asking a minister to approve of his Congregation, he had asked something injurious to the prince and hurtful to the state.

The venerable Mgr. Lucci, bishop of Bovino, was a great friend of the Marquis Fraggeani, president of the chamber of St. Chin, a man who had great influence with the ministry. When this worthy prelate asked his protection for the Congregation he replied harshly, "These missionaries will do like the Jesuits, begin poor, and afterwards never be satiated." The Bishop laughed at the objection. "And with what will they never be satiated?" said he, "with vermin, doubtless, which they get in abundance whilst visiting the miserable hovels of the poor."

While matters went on in this way Alphonso was not cast down; his hope was fixed on Him in whom it could never be confounded, and the

less reason he had to hope for anything from man, the more he hoped in God, hoping even against hope. Knowing that the only hinderance to the approbation being obtained was the fear of their acquiring wealth, he assured the King over and over again that they would be content with just sufficient to procure them the most scanty livelihood. The affair was again proposed in the council, and they were finally approved in November, 1752, on condition that they acquired no new revenues for the future.

They distributed copies of the decree to the superintendants of provinces, in which it was stated that the King did not recognize their houses as colleges or ecclesiastical communities, and that they were forbidden to acquire or possess any common fund or annual revenue that might in future be left to any priest of their community; that the moveables already acquired would be administered by the Bishops of the dioceses in which their houses were situated, and that the King would furnish each priest and lay-brother with about eightpence a day, and that the surplus revenue would be distributed to the poor. This decree caused great embarrassment to Alphonso, because as the King did not recognize their houses as colleges or religious communities, he feared their existence was still insecure. The Marquis Brancone viewed it in another light, and reassured him on the subject.

All these affairs lasted a year, during which he underwent great anxiety, alternately passing from hope to fear, but always submissive to the

good pleasure of God. "I believe," he said in writing to Mary Angela of Capua, "that God will mortify my pride, and that this approbation will not be given until after I am dead." He prophesied, for in reality the Congregation was not placed on a proper footing until the next reign after he was dead.

However, after this decision Alphonso and his Congregation plucked up new courage. They had now a legal existence, which shielded them from the persecutions of their enemies, and reduced them to silence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Towards the commencement of the year 1753, notwithstanding his grave and multiplied embarrassments, Alphonso published his Moral Theology. In the year 1748 he had, at the request of his Congregation, enriched Busembaum with many notes. These notes referred to different cases which had been discussed in the course of the missions, and which the Fathers wished to have printed, that they might consult them with facility. Afterwards Alphonso thought little of the work, although it had met with much approbation, for he considered it not sufficiently strong in proofs. He enlarged it, and published it at a later period, in two thick volumes, which he dedicated to Benedict XIV. who gave it his approbation.

This work was the fruit of a pure zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and while he laboured at it, he never embraced or rejected any opinion without having this double object in view, nor did he ever take up his pen without recommending himself to Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, whose images he had always before him. He used to say, "If the church and the state wish to see a reformation of manners, and devotion and piety flourishing in families, they must look for it from good confessors, and if the science of morals be neglected among these, the consequences must be disorders and irregularities." In this work he has been extremely careful to avoid the extremes of a relaxed probabilism or a rigid austerity, both of which are pernicious to the soul; but he followed throughout the line of an exact equity. He did not seek to release souls from the bonds imposed upon them by Jesus Christ and His Church, but neither would he have them laden with what neither Christ nor His Church had intended they should bear. His was not a rigidity to frighten or disturb consciences, neither was it an indulgence to flatter the passions or derogate from the Gospel. Where the law was clear, he took advantage of the liberty; and when it was not clear, if he favoured liberty, it was without giving in to relaxation; in a word, his was not that rigid spirit which turns into precept that which is not, wishing to make everything sinful, nor that easy and accommodating spirit which gives liberty where there is precept.

Alphonso as we have seen, attached himself to no party; he respected all, but above all he revered reason, and made the authority of the Church his law. He several times reproached the decisions of the most rigid theologians with relaxation, and hesitated not sometimes to reject as too rigid the decisions of the most indulgent. "Relictis auctoribus tam benignæ quam rigidæ sententiæ, (these are the words he addressed to Benedict XIV.,) alios nimium benignitate indulgentes, alios nimium austeritati addictos cum comperissem, operæ pretium me facturum credidi, si librum ederem qui, mediam viam tenens, sententias magis veritate consonas, magisque scitu necessarias ad conscientias diregendas, exponeret."

If we examine this work we shall find that it is but an extract from the ecclesiastical and civil laws; where these foundations were wanting, he adopted the doctrine of St. Thomas, and supplied the remainder by the authority of theologians generally approved. Whenever he hesitated between two opinions, he left the reader at liberty to choose between them for himself. "Reason," he said, "must serve us for a rule where the law is deficient, and where the Gospel has not been explicit; but where reason herself is uncertain, it is not necessary to decide blindly, but leave to others the care of throwing light upon it: and this is what I have done." Whenever he had a difficult case to consider, besides meditation and prayer, he passed entire months in examining different opinions, and when he was

not convinced, not satisfied with consulting the Fathers of his own Congregation, he sent to Rome and Naples for the opinion of the best theologians; and principally to the Sacred Congregations which are at Rome as the organs of the Sovereign Pontiff.

It would be endless to cite the many over-indulgent opinions which he has reduced to their just value, but it may be well to state that this Moral Theology has delivered the Church from a deplorable scandal which in many places degraded and disgraced the sanctuary. Certain confessors made no difficulty in considering fit for holy orders students or others who had newly abandoned an irregular life. They took for a maxim, that when one is prepared to receive the sacrament of penance, he is also prepared to receive the sacrament of holy orders. And has it not often happened, that these two sacraments have been conferred on persons as unworthy of the one as they were of the other? A disorder so grievous subsisting in the Church, made Alphonso publish a learned dissertation entitled "Clericus habitudinarius," which was generally applauded. He proved that a man in such circumstances, however fit he may be to receive the sacrament of penance, is not in the dispositions exacted from him who receives order, and that if he persists in wishing to receive this last sacrament, he renders himself unworthy even of the sacrament of penance. This exhortation was addressed to the Bishops of Italy, who without exception returned him the warmest thanks;

one of them wrote, "Your Reverence has a right to the gratitude of every Bishop; as for me I have drawn so much light from your precious work, that I consider it a duty to testify to you my grateful acknowledgments." This dissertation has been applauded throughout the Church, and even quoted with approbation by Benedict XIV. in his valuable work "de Synodo diœcesana."

Everything in this work contributed to the glory of Alphonso. Notwithstanding the favourable reception the first edition met with, he reviewed the whole to examine it with still more reflection before publishing a second edition; he corrected it in several points, as he himself announced in the preface: "Nonnullas opiniones, temporis decursu, rebus ad utiliorem trutinam revocatis, hominem me agnoscens, reformavi." To deceive oneself is the characteristic of man, but few know equally well how to avow and publicly retract their errors. Alphonso, who forgot himself to seek God only, did not fail to particularise those points on which he believed he had been mistaken. The respectable Congregations of Naples, however, did not agree in his retractations, judging that the opinions which he wished to retract were sufficiently probable. Some went so far as to say these retractations were not to his credit. "Let them say what they will," he replied, "I seek not my own glory, I seek only the glory of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of souls."

As he would not allow himself to be ruled

by the spirit of party, neither would he permit himself to be guided by the spirit of authority. Although Founder and Superior, he did not oblige his own Congregation to follow him, but left each one free to adopt the opinion he judged best, although contrary to his, provided it neither weakened nor opposed the Canons nor the Gospel, nor was he so rigid as to frighten the faithful and be an occasion of their loss. If he knew that any among them gave in to any dangerous extreme, he never rested until he had convinced them of their error.

The future will show how much and in what manner God blessed his labours and upright intentions, not only in Italy, but in many other countries. The Pope spoke prophetically when he assured him of universal approbation. Benedict had such a high esteem for his wisdom, that on one occasion, when a celebrated Neapolitan missionary came to consult him on a difficult case, this great Pope would not give a decision, but contented himself with replying, "You have the Father Liguori at Naples, consult him."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The King, Charles III. continued to be more and more satisfied with the labours of Alphonso and his missionaries, and often inquired particularly into their affairs. To render justice to Alphonso he conceived the idea of erecting the

Congregation into a Religious Order, to perpetuate the work of the missions in the kingdom.

A respectable and very ancient order had at this time fallen into decay, and a holy individual, charmed with the zeal of Alphonso, proposed to their Majesties that he should undertake its reform. They were delighted with the idea, and proposed to the Marquis Brancone to mention it to him. Their plan was, that Alphonso and his companions, without abandoning their own rule, should take the habit and the name of the order in question. The thing appeared easy and not dangerous; the ancient religious could take refuge in certain of their convents without being disquieted by the reform. Alphonso would not decide on this affair, but begged the Marquis to give him time to consult with his companions before replying to the King. The project was advantageous in some respects; but when they reflected on the dangers to which the enterprise would expose them, they recognised, that however great might be the protection given them by the King, they could not effect the reform without encountering many difficulties and contradictions, such as all holy reformers had experienced who had ever undertaken such a work; that many, even when supported by royal and papal authority, had failed in their endeavours, and that in the midst of the confusions which must follow, the work of the missions, instead of progressing, would on the contrary be seriously impeded. Alphonso considered also, that a religious order was a thing which

ought not to end, and that if the King died before everything was settled, the ancient order continuing to exist, they might find themselves some day neither missionaries nor religious. Besides, some of his Congregation would not exchange their cassock for the habit of the Regulars, and many would return again to their own homes and leave the work of the missions, should this plan be adopted; so that from different powerful considerations he abandoned all idea of the scheme, although deeply grateful for the favour his Sovereign had shown him.

In the month of July, 1753, they were invited to the house of a physician named Francis Mari, to give the Novena of the Feast of Carmel at Saragnano. Alphonso, though overpowered with previous fatigue, would not refuse to go, as the feast was in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and an event occurred on this occasion which showed how agreeable he was to his Virgin Mother. Twelve Fathers arrived one Thursday immediately before dinner, and as they were not expected so soon, nothing was prepared for such a large party. The physician Mari sent to his neighbours to borrow, but as he could get nothing, he requested Alphonso to dispense with the rule and allow him to serve fowls. "No, no," said he smiling, "give yourself no further trouble, put the meat you have on the table and God will supply what is wanting." They had purchased eight pounds of meat for the family, consisting of eighteen persons, and they had besides, the twelve newcomers, making in all, with Alphonso and an-

other Father, thirty-two individuals. But while they were cutting the meat in the kitchen, they saw the pieces becoming visibly larger, and to such an extent did they increase, that after the whole party were abundantly served a considerable quantity remained. Mari afterwards attested that the meat had increased at least sevenfold. Alphonso seeing the astonishment of Mari, said, "In all embarrassments let us have recourse to God, and never doubt his providence."

The autumn and winter of 1753 were fruitful in missions. The inhabitants of Resina asked for a mission, but because of its proximity to Naples Alphonso refused; the people however applied to the King, who laid his commands on Alphonso and furnished all the expenses himself. They afterwards went into the royal territory of Persano, always at the expense of his Majesty, whose good heart delighted in affording his subjects means of grace. The Marquis Brancone, convinced of the greatness of the work, sent them frequent subsidies, and many Bishops contributed liberally towards the expense of the missions.

Fruitful as the missions were, the spiritual exercises given in the different houses were still more successful. When the decree given in favour of the Congregation became known in the provinces, and the small revenue assigned to the missionaries, there was hardly a single diocese that did not apply to have a house established in it; eager to obtain such a blessing, the people struggled to have a preference. Scarcely had they given a mission in any place, when

all the inhabitants set themselves to form sufficient revenues according to the royal decree to establish a house. They addressed supplications to the King from all quarters, and this good prince rejoiced to see the cause of religion prospering.

Alphonso was in no hurry to answer all these demands, for he had not a sufficient number of subjects to establish communities who could observe the rule. The King on his side was restrained by the unwillingness of his government to increase religious houses, and when it was proposed to suppress certain convents, Alphonso would never consent to it, from the pain it would cause to the respectable religious against whom these measures would be taken.

He this year had to mourn over the death of the Father Cafaro, who died at Caposile on the 13th of August. He loved and esteemed him, regarding him as a model of heroic sanctity, whose example drew others to sacrifice themselves for God. Prayer and mortification were his two inseparable companions; he was the director of Alphonso, who never departed from his counsels. He besought the prayers of all that this great support of the Congregation might be spared, but the hour was come, and Alphonso bowed in submission, adoring the decrees of God.

CHAPTER XL.

Alphonso had now attained his fifty-sixth year, and although of no very advanced age, his continued indispositions prevented him from taking long journeys and visiting all the different houses of his Congregation. Besides, his presence was often necessary at Naples to arrange affairs, and this confined him to the neighbourhood of Nocera, so that he was obliged to inform himself of the state of the houses, and provide for their wants by means of visitors.

In the year 1754 he addressed a circular to them which is still extant, it is dated the 8th August, and breathes such love to God and zeal for the observance of the rule, that the spirit and sentiments of the Saint cannot be better shown than by giving it entire:

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"I beseech you all, my Brethren in Jesus Christ, before listening to the reading of this letter, to chant the Veni Creator Spiritus, and ask of God light to understand and put in execution that which, in the name of Jesus Christ, I write to all, and to each one in particular.

"Fathers and Brethren, it is not yet twenty-two years since our Congregation was formed, and but five years since it has been approved

by the Holy Church, therefore it ought at this hour not only to maintain itself in its first fervour, but still more, to have made progress. It is true that many conduct themselves well, but there are others who, instead of advancing, want heart. For such I know not where they will end, for God has called us into this Congregation, above all in these first times, to live as Saints and die as Saints. Whoever proposes to save himself in the Congregation, unless by becoming a Saint, I know not if he will be saved. If this want of fervour spreads, poor Congregation! where wilt thou be fifty years hence? Poor Jesus Christ! if Thou art not loved by a member of this Congregation, which has received from Thee so many graces and so many especial lights, by whom wilt Thou be loved? My God! of what use are so many prayers, so many communions? What have we come to do in this Congregation? What would we do if we would not make ourselves Saints? We should only deceive the world, who esteem us as Saints, and afford a subject of derision at the day of judgment to those who will then know our imperfections. There are at present many good novices, but they, as well as those who come after, will be made worse than us by following our example, and before long the Congregation will relax in everything, for imperfections will grow into scandals; and if this misfortune happens it would be better, my Brethren, to beseech the Lord to dissolve our Congregation now.

"Now that I am already old and sick also,

the day approaches in which I must render my account. I wish to be useful to you as much as I can, and God knows how I love each one of you as my Brethren, as my Mother. But God wills not that I peril my own salvation by love, an immoderate love, for any one among you. We are all miserable, we all commit faults; but that which grieves me is not passing faults, but those which establish themselves amongst us, and certain weaknesses which bring damage to the whole community. If any one among you knowingly adopt such and defend them, or even excuse them, for my part I declare to you, that I will not and ought not to tolerate them. Such, for example, as offences against obedience, poverty, humility, or brotherly charity. I hope by the grace of God to preserve these sentiments until death, and punctually to conform myself to them. I adhere also to the promise I have made to God, never to yield to human respect, never to see the brethren fail in any important point, or be in any manner hurtful to their neighbours, without reproving them.

"You know already that perhaps my greatest fault is too much condescendance, but I hope God will give me strength not to suffer the imperfect who will not correct themselves, but who justify their imperfections. I beseech you, you who are young, and who now govern in the Congregation, not to tolerate an imperfection of this kind, never to tolerate one who after a fault justifies instead of humbling himself. I protest that at the day of judgment I will accuse

that superior at the tribunal of Jesus Christ who, to avoid displeasing some one, would tolerate dangerous faults, and be the cause of relaxation in the Congregation. Now I speak not with regard to the past; if any one has committed a fault I do not mean to reproach him, I speak only in regard to the future.

"And now for what is of still greater consequence; and I entreat each one among you to pay particular attention to what I am about to say.

"I exhort you to value your vocation, which is the greatest blessing God could confer upon you, after the benefits of creation and redemption. Let each one of you thank God for it every day, and tremble lest you should lose it. Do not allow yourselves to be deceived by the enemy, should he try to persuade you that you might do equally well in your own country and out of the Congregation, and that there you would enjoy greater peace. What good would he do? Nemo propheta acceptus in patria sua. Each one of you knows it, and experience proves it, that a priest in the Congregation will save more souls in one year, than during a whole lifetime out of it; and with regard to personal advantages a subject will gain more in one year by practising obedience, than he would in ten years living according to his own caprice. Besides, it is our business to do the good God wishes us to do, and not the good we please to do ourselves. Now God wishes from him who is called into the Congregation, the good and the works

imposed on him by the rule and by his superiors. Peace? and what peace! Quis restitit ei, et pacem habuit? Behold it, my Brethren, in those who have abandoned the Congregation. What peace can God give to the unfaithful, who through caprice, and to escape mortification, lose their vocation, and throw far from them the will of God! And particularly at the moment of death, what peace will they find in the thought that they die out of the Congregation? I will say no more of this at present, because each of you understand me very well; but the evil is, that when the temptation comes, they see no longer, and think it but a light matter to lose a vocation. Attend to what I beseech you to observe, that no one may imagine I threaten in the fear of losing a subject. By the grace of God the Congregation is now well provided with good subjects, and every day brings young men full of fervour and talent, as you all know. The name of the Congregation is spread throughout the kingdom, and even beyond it, and it is believed we increase in fervour and in perfection, (would to God it were true!) Thus the good will always remain with us for the missions and giving retreats. But should we not be able to give so many missions, it would always be better to preserve the spirit of observance with a small number, than to see the Congregation peopled by multitudes of relaxed subjects. The small number who follow the right way, would give more pleasure to God than a thousand others who lived imperfectly. To conclude touching

this first point: Woe to him who loses his vocation! And in reference to this, I renew to each of you the formal precept of obedience, in virtue of which no person must go out of the Congregation without having first obtained my express permission, with the absolution and relaxation of the vow and oath of perseverance, unless he has obtained it from the sovereign Pontiff.

"I beseech each of you to obey and not to resist the authority of the local superiors; if any one wishes to present some claim, that is permitted; but I ask that previously he make an act of obedience, if his claim be judged unreasonable; that he first resign himself, and then make known his thought; otherwise, without this precaution, he will remain unquiet if his reasons are not admitted, and the inquietude of his mind will be gain to the devil. Father Colombiere made a vow to go always contrary to his own will. If you cannot do as much, at least let me request you will be attentive often to contradict your own will, the satisfaction of which is the ruin of the soul. St. Catherine of Bologna says, that we ought to perform difficult obediences (easy obediences are no great merit) without murmuring, neither exteriorly complaining, for example, of food, of clothes, or the conduct of superiors, (which is a great fault,) nor even murmuring interiorly, because that interior murmurs equally trouble the spirit.

"I beseech each of you not to attempt to change his house without an evident necessity,

not even when the necessity appears evident, I still desire that before making the request you resign yourself to submit to the judgment of the superior, even should it be contrary to yours. I protest that my will is not to give way in this particular without a very evident reason, because otherwise favours of this kind may be the source of much annoyance to the members of the Congregation. I beseech all of you never to complain among yourselves of the conduct of the local superiors, because that might be a subject of great temptation both for him who complains and he who listens.

"Again, I implore each one of you to ask from Jesus Christ His holy love, because without that all your resolutions will be useless; and to obtain this holy love, think continually of the passion of our Lord, meditate upon it every day, and practise the way of the cross whenever you can. We give great pleasure to Jesus Christ when we meditate on His sorrows and the contempts He suffered for us. Now if we think often upon His passion, it will be impossible for us not to be smitten with love for Him. I beg the superiors present and future to introduce often in the chapters the love of Jesus Christ and His passion. As for ourselves, in the missions, we insinuate nothing so much as Jesus Christ suffering. What a shame will it be for us at the day of judgment, if it be found that one of us has loved Jesus Christ less than some old woman has done!

"Let each of you love his cell, and not distract

his thoughts by running backwards and forwards during the day. Be covetous of time to employ it in meditation, and in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, which is exposed expressly for us. Let us attach ourselves to study because it is absolutely necessary for us. I recommend to confessors the study of morals, and not to follow blindly the opinions of certain doctors without considering the intrinsic reasons, and especially those which in my Second Book I have not admitted as probable. I affirm, and the probabilists agree with me, every confessor ought first to examine, in every kind of question, if there be not an intrinsic reason capable of convincing him, for otherwise the contrary opinion becomes probable. Only when reason fails to convince us, can we make use of extrinsic probability. Give your attention to this, because I fear that on this point some may commit a notable error. Let us observe that in the Second Book I generally admit as probable other opinions besides those which are called so by me. I do not pretend that it is necessary for you to follow my opinions, but I beg of you, before rejecting them, carefully to read my book, and consider what I have written with so much fatigue, research, and study; and I have not laboured thus, my brethren, in order to gain applause; I would willingly have done much less, if I had expected only to draw from it a little smoke. God knows the anxiety and pain I have had to endure, and I have done it for you, my Brethren, that you might have good doctrine to guide you.

"I confess that there are many opinions that I considered well founded, but which afterwards, on further examination, appeared to me improbable; therefore I entreat all the students and confessors to read my book, since I have composed it with this intention, and afterwards let them hold by the opinion which before God they consider to be the most probable. Among the improbable opinions, I especially include that which counsels the absolving the candidate for holy orders who habitually commits mortal sin, when he presents himself with the fitting dispositions for receiving the sacrament of penance; for in such an one positive goodness is not simply a suitable thing, as some have falsely supposed, but it is an absolute necessity, not because of the new sacrament which he receives, (for that, it is simply necessary to be in a state of grace,) but because of the dignity to which he aspires, which absolutely exacts a high degree of excellence, for the canons and doctors commonly say with St. Thomas, that such a goodness "præexigitur, requiritur, necessaria est." Words which all express a true necessity, and not simply a suitableness. The reason is, that such a candidate in sacris, whether because of the eminence of the state to which he would be raised, or of the holy functions which he would exercise, ought to have this positive goodness, which supposes not only that the subject is exempt from grave faults, but that he moreover possesses a certain degree of virtue acquired by acts practised anteriorly. I have myself sustained at first the

contrary opinion, but afterwards I have seen that it was altogether improbable, and for this reason I retract it.

"I recommend in the last place, to all superiors present and future, to watch over the observance of the rules; this observance is entirely in their hands. The Rector Major is at a distance; if the local Rector takes no care of them, the Rector Major cannot remedy it; moreover it is necessary that the superiors not only preach the observation of the rules, but that they themselves be the first to practise them. What we see makes a greater impression than what we hear. I recommend to superiors at the same time, charity towards inferiors, that they strengthen them in temptation, that they try as much as possible to comfort them in their necessities, and that they consider it of obligation to inquire into their wants. Now I recommend above all things the settling of conscience every month, and when it cannot be done the first Monday, that it be done the second. I especially recommend attention and charity towards the sick, whether in visiting them, and providing them as much as possible with the necessary remedies, or in asking them if they have all things necessary, and giving them consolation if poverty prevents the procuring for them what they need. I recommend still more that superiors make the necessary corrections in secret, because, when made in public, they are of little use, if at the same time the fault has not been public; but for the inferior himself, it is always better in

every case that he should be admonished privately at first, before having recourse to public correction.

"As to inferiors in particular, I recommend to them never to say that the same regularity is now no longer apparent in the Congregation, and that it has departed from its first observance, because this is not true, for there are many excellent subjects who hold themselves attached to the rules whatever may be the faults which have crept in among us from the number of subjects. Nevertheless, let each seek to correct himself and live according to rule, never forgetting that those who fail, and will not amend, cannot be tolerated by the Congregation. Also let every one when he commits a fault, immediately make an act of interior humiliation if the fault be interior, and an exterior one by accusing himself publicly, if the fault has been exterior; and above all, let him make a firm resolution to amend it. If any one has a grudge against one of his brethren or against the superior, let him be careful not to act according to his first impulse, but to calm himself first, recommend himself to God, and afterwards, if he believe it is necessary, to communicate the matter to the superior either by word of mouth or in writing. I beseech you for the love of Jesus Christ to pay attention to this. Oh! how many faults would be avoided if this rule were observed; for at the first blush things appear very different from what they are. For this cause I beg the superiors themselves never to correct at

the moment they feel irritated, but wait until the soul is restored to tranquillity, otherwise there will always be excess, and the reproof will be of little use. I recommend as much as possible detachment from relations, for it is certain, as Jesus Christ has said, that they are the greatest enemies of our perfection. Let each one beware even of naming honour in the Congregation. What is above all honour in a member of the Congregation, is to love to obey, to see himself despised and little thought of. For the Saints have desired to be despised in order to resemble Jesus Christ, and he who has no desire to become a Saint cannot remain in the Congregation. Jesus Christ Himself, who loves this Congregation, will chase him out of it.

"It is the Lord's wish, that the corner-stones of the edifice be sufficiently strong to sustain those who rest upon them, and that they may not thrust out those which are placed beside them; that is to say, He wishes that you who have been present at the commencement of the Congregation should not only serve as an example to those who come after, but also that you should give no occasion of scandal to one another.

"Again, I recommend to you love of poverty; let no one forget that in the catalogue of faults that will not be pardoned among us, must be counted those that are committed against poverty and obedience, for without these two virtues there is no fervour, and without fervour the community is destroyed.

"All that I write presents itself to my mind without having any individual in view. I have written for every one, and more for the members yet to come, than for those actually in the Congregation. For the rest, let no one imagine that I preserve in my mind any bitterness against him for past faults, whatever they may have been. I declare that in my conduct I desire only to regulate myself after the example of Jesus Christ, who forgets the sins of those who humble themselves. Understand then, that he who has the misfortune to break the rule, may be sure of pardon, and that the past will be forgotten if he sincerely humble himself; and what is more, from the moment he humbles himself he will become more dear to me than ever he was before. I say this, that no person may lose courage, if he happen to fall into fault. But let each one guard against trifling failings, and above all, let him abstain from committing a deliberate fault, because the devil generally leads us on from such to graver faults, in order that we may lose our vocation and be excluded from the Congregation.

"Finally, my Brethren, be persuaded that each of you, after God, is the single object of my love, and that for each one of you I would from this moment offer to God my blood and my life, because the life of you who are young can contribute much to the glory of God, and as to me who am old, and sick, and infirm, my life can serve for little or nothing.

"Fear not to address yourselves to me in

your wants, those who are at a distance can write to me. Do not fear to importune me; the thought that you can trouble me either by speaking or writing, can only come from the devil. Believe me, the more you show this confidence towards me, the more you bind me to you in the closest bonds. You may be certain that I would leave every thing when one of my Brethren or my sons require me to console them. It is of more consequence for me to succour one of them, than to do any other species of good, it is the good work which God demands of me above all others, while I am invested with this charge.

"To conclude, let us sanctify ourselves, my Brethren, in the period of time that remains to us, whether short or long, who can tell? Within a very short time we have lost three young men, and with them Father Paul Cafaro, whose simplicity might make him be regarded as young also. Let us love Jesus Christ with an ardent love; we owe it to Him, we above all, whom He has loved more than others. Let us love a God, who died for love of us. Let us kindle our faith, for we have but a few days to pass in this exile, and after that eternity awaits us. We preach to others these truths, and in fact they are the verities of faith. We have no longer to live for ourselves, nor yet for the world, but only for God, only for eternity. Let us make ourselves Saints, and for this end let us offer ourselves always to Jesus Christ, that He may make of us what He will, and let us pray always to the Most

Holy Virgin, that she may obtain for us the great treasure of love to God. When the devil tempts us on the subject of vocation, and that is his greatest effort against us, let each one have recourse to this good Mother, that she may ask perseverance for him, and certainly he will not lose his vocation. I bless you and embrace you all in the heart of Jesus Christ. Let us love Him much on earth, that afterwards we may go to love Him together in the celestial Paradise. Lose not the beautiful crown that I see prepared for each of you who live according to the rule, and who die in the Congregation.

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"Brother Alphonso,
"Of the Most Holy Redeemer."

CHAPTER XLI.

Although approved by the Pope, the Congregation had not yet entered the Pontifical States. D. Joseph Fusco, the Grand Vicar of Mgr. Pacca, Archbishop of Benevento, convinced of the great good done by the missionaries, proposed to the Archbishop to supply the necessities of his vast diocese, by establishing a house of the order in it. The prelate entered into his views, and Alphonso was requested to send some one to arrange matters.

Nicolas Borgia, Bishop of Cava, and Mgr. Volpe,

Bishop of Nocera, both entered warmly into the scheme, and the former fearing the desire felt by the Archbishop of Benevento might cool, thought he would second the measure by interesting Mgr. Passante, Bishop of Montemarano, a friend of Mgr. Pacca, and offered to accompany Father Villani, and procure for him letters of recommendation in passing by Montemarano.

When the two travellers set out, the weather was beautiful and calm, but they had not proceeded far when a thunderstorm came on, the lightning flashed, and the rain fell in torrents. Twice within a short time a thunderbolt fell at Mgr. Borgia's feet, but full of confidence in God he tranquilly pursued his journey, and arrived safe at the house of Mgr. Passante. This prelate, excited by example, offered to accompany them to Benevento.

The Archbishop Pacca was touched even to tears when he saw the zeal that animated the two Bishops: "If I should sell my mitre," he said, "I will help to found this house." It was decided they should be established at St. Angela dela Coupola, a fief belonging to the Archbishop, and to prevent delay he arranged in the meantime a lodging for the Fathers in a country house formerly inhabited by Benedict XIII. when he was only Archbishop. When matters were finally arranged, Alphonso chose for the new house the Fathers Villani, Margotta, de Robertis and others, and on the 6th of April, 1755, they were established amidst universal rejoicing.

The Archbishop having them now at his own

disposal, would have the first fruits of their labours consecrated to the metropolis of the diocese, and made the Fathers Villani and Margotta give a retreat to the students secular and regular, and also to a part of the seminarists. God blessed this beginning; a general reformation took place among them. The Archbishop suppressed in the seminary the teaching of the Aristotelian philosophy, and established instead modern authors whose doctrines were sound. They had in this establishment no idea of geometry and metaphysics; and these sciences were immediately introduced. In the theological classes they replaced the lessons dictated by orthodox authors.

In the month of May, 1755, a great drought afflicted the country, and to obtain the divine mercy a retreat was given in the cathedral by Father Villani, who was selected by the Grand Vicar Fusco in preference to all others. The manner of preaching peculiar to the Congregation is clear and simple, and it satisfied people of all ranks. Compunction was general, and more than three thousand persons approached at one time to the holy table. The good Archbishop wept for joy; and all declared they had never witnessed such results; the satisfaction was so general that the retreat was prolonged until the twelfth day.

Mgr. Pacca was so charmed with the results that he went to Nocera to visit Alphonso and thank him as the author of a work so salutary for the people; he invited him to give a mission at Benevento himself, which he agreed to do in

November following. The Archbishop declared that it was to him, after God, he would confide the interests of his diocese, and offered every assistance in his power to promote the building of their establishment. While he lived, he regarded the missionaries as his guardian angels, and never undertook any affair of importance without asking their advice.

Alphonso had been several years resident at Nocera, and had ceased to give retreats at Ciorani, but at the beginning of Lent Father Rossi had requested him to yield to the desire of that house and come to them during Passion Week. As soon as his arrival was known, there was such a concourse of priests and gentlemen, that Father Rossi had to dispatch messengers in four different directions to warn them that there was no more room, but the people would not return, and resolved to pass the night before the door rather than not hear Alphonso. The prince of Castellanita was there with twelve officers of his regiment, and many gentlemen who slept four in a room, or on mattresses in the corridor. The Count d' Aquila was so touched by grace, that hearing one of his soldiers swear by the blood of Jesus Christ, he condemned him to be tied to a pole three hours morning and evening by the hair of his head, with a gag in his mouth for a whole week.

It was at this time a discussion took place between Alphonso and a polemic who was displeased by his censures on Muratori, for speaking lightly of the power of the Blessed Virgin. Al-

phonso answered his attacks so mildly, and at the same time so convincingly, that his adversary, a disciple of Jansenism, set himself all at once to attack his Moral Theology, and after having criticised it according to his fancy, he assumed an ironical tone, and suggested that Alphonso in quality of superior should oblige all his religious to take it to their hearts, and in their hands, and even to keep it constantly in their cell. In his reply, he passed over all this insolence without noticing it, and placing himself before his anonymous adversary as if he were his judge, he explained to him all the motives which had induced him to publish his work. "I have not published my Moral Theology," he said, "with the desire of being known and praised. I should have been a fool, if after having quitted the world and withdrawn into the Congregation to weep over my sins, I had spent ten years in useless labour and fatigue, for what? to receive a little incense, and from a very small number of persons; for in treating on matters of controversy, I might have known beforehand, that all those who held contrary opinions would cry out against me, and accuse me either with having too much severity, or too great indulgence; and this has really happened, for I have been accused of both."

Touching a point of conscience in which he was accused of laxity, he adds, "As to the scruples you wish to excite in me, my venerable censor, I confess that it is true I dread the account I must render to God for the life I led in

the world, and that all my hope of pardon is founded on Jesus Christ my Saviour in the first place, and afterwards on Mary my Mother, and advocate with Jesus Christ; but as to the sentiments I have advanced in my work, I have no reason to doubt the consequences of the account I must render to God."

After having justified himself by the authority of several theologians of sound doctrine, from the blame thrown on him by his anonymous adversary, he says, "But what a thing! my censurer has not examined my book; I speak of the second edition, and not of the first, which I have since corrected, thanks to God, and he knows it; he pretends that it is a pernicious book and full of falsehood. It was not thus the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV. judged of it."

The moderation with which he confounded his censurer, drew upon him the esteem of all Italy.

CHAPTER XLII.

In the course of the autumn, 1755, Alphonso went, as he had promised, to give a mission at Benevento. He went by Naples, where he found his mother dangerously ill, but he had the consolation of seeing her delivered from the scruples which had formerly tormented her, and entirely submissive to the will of God. He administered the sacraments to her, and fortified her by his counsels during three days. As he could no

longer delay his mission, he asked her parting benediction and set out for Benevento. This separation was sorrowful neither for the one nor the other. Alphonso departed consoled by seeing his mother dying the death of the just, and she was equally consoled by the thought that her son left her only to conquer souls for Jesus Christ.

He arrived at Benevento accompanied by twenty of his missionaries. The effects were marvellous, and continued to be felt for many years after. A prelate who was present afterwards wrote, "It is long since we have seen men so truly apostolic; one can form no idea of the effects they produce, but the arrival of Alphonso awakened recollections that had long slumbered. The voice of the holy missionary was weakened by age, and still more by fatigue, but the sight of his zeal was sufficient to soften the hardest hearts and melt them like wax. Benevento has been sanctified, and numerous malefactors when they saw him there became models of piety. All ranks profited by his labours, so that a general reformation of manners succeeded."

The fruits of this mission were so great that the renown of it reached Rome, and Cardinal Orsini wrote to Alphonso that the Pope had been so satisfied with what he had heard, that he spoke himself to the Duke de Cerisan to obtain from his Majesty an exequatur to the brief of approbation given to the Congregation.

Deploring the ignorance of many clerks, par-

ticularly in remote parts of the country, and the great necessities of poor souls, he tried to remedy these great evils; and to render the priests more skilful in hearing confessions he published his Moral Theology in Italian, in three octavo volumes. He enriched this work with new instructions and gave it a new form. He explained shortly and with great clearness, the points most controverted, and added three interesting appendixes for the direction of souls. The work met with great applause at home, and when it became known out of Italy, and the demand for it in foreign countries increased, Alphonso translated it into Latin under the title of Homo Apostolicus.

Different affairs connected with the Congregation obliged him to go to Naples towards the end of February, 1756, and God would not permit him to repose. The Cardinal Sersale, who knew the talent God had given him for touching hearts, no sooner heard of his arrival than he besought him to give spiritual exercises in a hall of the palace to the clerks. Seeing that these exercises would require much time he sent to Nocera for Father Gaitan Spera, who gave an instruction every morning, he himself giving one in the evening. He expected only the young students, but as soon as he was known to be there, there ran thither multitudes of canons, missionaries, and entire religious communities. The number was not less than a thousand. His Eminence assisted, and experienced indescribable satisfaction in seeing such a concourse of penitents, for

the most distinguished men of letters left their studies to come and listen to Alphonso. Among others was the celebrated James Martorelli, who was confounded by the admirable simplicity of his language, which made the most extraordinary impression on the listeners. "It is God who speaks," he exclaimed, "it is not a man whom we hear!" One young man was converted who had been guilty of the greatest excesses; at the voice of Alphonso grace prevailed so victoriously over the corruptions of his heart that he was willing for the glory of God to declare his enormities in a public confession. A sermon preached on the protection of the Virgin touched another equally sunk in sin, and he for the glory of Mary desired that his name should be proclaimed from the pulpit. He called around him all the young candidates for the ministry who assisted at these exercises, and spoke to them particularlarly on the sanctity of orders, and on the dispositions requisite, and the conduct they ought to maintain after ordination. He exhorted them daily to meditate on the passion of our Lord if they would continue in a state of grace, and above all to serve with great devotion the Blessed Virgin Mary, recommending to them weekly communion, and a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every evening.

Having compassion on the servants of the Cardinal and of the seminary who had not time to attend, he one day assembled them all, even to the very lowest, and instructed them on the duties of their condition. It was as a salutary

stream which flowed and penetrated to the depths of their heart, and all gave great signs of amendment, for henceforward they were attentive to the duties of their office, and found time to recommend themselves to God and frequent the Sacraments. The Cardinal shed tears of joy over the reformation of his people.

Alphonso was held in such estimation that even his admirers were astonished. Canons, superiors of orders, and even bishops pressed to the door of the saloon, to have the pleasure of kissing his hand. He humbled himself interiorly, and enveloped himself in his mantle to escape observation.

When these exercises were finished, invitations flowed in upon him to such an extent that he knew not where to begin, and to satisfy all he had to promise to preach three days consecutively in each church. When the Cardinal saw the effect he had produced on the young people of the seminary, he insisted on his returning to preach to them once every week, to confirm them more and more in the good resolution they had formed. The directors of the seminaries in the town and in the diocese also entreated him to grant them the same favour, so that he often preached two and three times in one day.

The convents also gave him occupation, and he never refused when asked to go to them. The nuns of St. Francis of Sales invited him to celebrate the offices in their church, but this he refused to do, as it was only a ceremonial, but when asked to preach he was always ready.

In the house he had not a moment's repose; gentlemen, magistrates, priests and religious, bishops and archbishops, succeeded each other without interruption, and when they did not find him they would return three or four times. Hector Carafa, Duke of Andria, not being able to find him at home, waited in the church, and with difficulty could speak with him for a few minutes in one of the corners.

Naples, like all other capitals, was not exempt from great disorders, which caused much pain to Alphonso; but above all, that which oppressed his heart most was to see the increase of homicide, caused by the doctrines of the materialists and deists propagated in Italy. He deplored with Cardinal Sersale the sad consequences which he foresaw would accrue to the Church and State. He would willingly have shed his blood to provide a remedy. He pointed out to the Cardinal the great evils that would be produced by the introduction of impious books, which passed from Naples into the provinces, corrupting the faith and morals of the people, and urged him to remonstrate with the King and his ministers on this subject. To inspire the people with horror for such productions, he spoke openly from the pulpit, condemning as guilty of grave sin those who sold such books, and also those who kept them in their houses.

In his desire to remedy such a great evil he spoke to the most respectable ecclesiastics and confessors, advising them to devise means to warn the faithful against the artifices of impiety.

While he was occupied with this affair he passed a whole night without sleep, continually haunted by the thought of the ruin such works would entail on the souls of the people. On the following morning he hastened to the Cardinal, to speak to him still more urgently on the deplorable consequences incredulity would bring upon Naples.

About this time he published his learned treatise of the Defence of Religion and of the State, against the materialists and deists. This work is divided into two parts. In the first he proves against the materialists the necessity of an universal Creator, and overturns the monstrous system of Spinosa, treating of the existence of a God, the first Cause of all things and infinite in His perfections. In the second he proves against the deists the truth of revealed religion and the divinity of the Holy Scriptures; he confounds also the errors of Berkley, Leibnitz, and Wolf. The work was well received, and found to be particularly useful for those weak and little minds who allow themselves to be easily abused and deceived.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Alphonso returned to Nocera in Holy Week, 1756; he was glad to enter into retreat to comfort his soul, and converse alone with Jesus suffering for a few days. But scarcely had he reached

the house when he was called away by the queen mother, who wished to consult him on affairs of conscience. He was received at court as a messenger from God; every one looked on him with the greatest veneration, and esteemed themselves happy if they could procure in secret something that had been used by him.

The court was then at St. Lauro, and the nuns of the monastery of St. Lauro, not knowing how to obtain a morsel of his clothing, hit on the following expedient. They invited him to visit a beautiful reliquary they preserved in their Church, and whilst he held it in his hand they begged him to give it to each of them to kiss, and while he bent forward for this purpose, one of the pensioners came behind him, and cut a large piece off his mantle. In the evening as he was very cold he took it to spread over his bed, but finding it very short, he said to F. Galdieri, who accompanied him, "This mantle is not mine, is it yours?" "It is your own," said the Father. "How can it be mine?" returned Alphonso, "it is too short for me." "The nuns have played you that trick," said his companion laughing. "Yes," he replied in confusion, "I see now; I could not comprehend how in walking I always felt something striking against my leg," adding without showing the least vanity, "the fact is, I would require an old clothes shop to mend it." Wherever he stopt the same sort of thefts were committed.

In the beginning of July, 1756, he went again to Naples. The interests of the Congregation

detained him at the court, and he wished to assure himself more and more of the protection of the King, and obtain at length the exequatur to the apostolic brief. On the tenth of the same month he wrote to the different houses, ordering a novena to be made for the success of this affair, and a discipline every evening.

During all his anxieties, and in the greatest heat of summer, he lost not a moment in helping the souls of others. Besides the invitations of curates for the Triduo, and instructions to the people, the Convents left him no repose. Several among them were so eager to hear him, that notwithstanding the excessive heats they put themelves in retreat. Others esteemed themselves happy to have him for two or three days; it would be impossible to enumerate the multitude of nuns who pressed to speak to him in the confessional. The Archbishop gave him the full power of the keys, without reserve of person or place.

There were many confraternities established at Naples. Many of these holy societies invited him to rekindle the fervour of their devotion, and animate them to the observance of their original rules. He lent himself with hearty good-will to all who required him, excluding no one from his charity.

He published at this time a little work which had the greatest success in Italy, entitled, "Method for the Confessor to exercise his ministry well." This work was so much admired, that the most learned men went the length of

saying that he could not have composed it without the special assistance of his guardian angel.

Considering the confessor as a father, as a physician, as a doctor, and judge, he gave him rules of conduct proper to each of these characters. He showed him the manner of instructing the ignorant, and those of all conditions, bishops not excepted. He warned confessors to distinguish in sinners the occasional, the habitual, and the relapsed, to pay special attention to those who incurred censures, and to all cases connected with marriage; he traced the manner in which they ought to treat children, young men and women, the deaf, dumb, and dying, those who were condemned to death, persons possessed, and also the devout and timid. He spoke afterwards of the direction of souls who are in different degrees of the spiritual life, and neither did he forget the mortification of the flesh, of the passions, the frequentation of the sacraments, and other things not less useful and necessary.

These instructions were quite characteristic of Alphonso himself, his spirit of science and wisdom, of love and gentleness. He did not flatter sin, on the contrary he excited hatred of it, and a desire to obtain help from God. The author of the Dictionary of Illustrious Men, says of this work, "It breathes a divine unction; all is charity, gentleness, and moderation." Three years before Orchi had published at Venice something of the same sort, but according to the critic just quoted they were instructions undigested and full of fanaticism, which the work of Alphonso would soon cast into oblivion.

Francis Zaccharie, a learned Jesuit, eulogised the work in the twelfth volume of his History of Literature where he says, "What a precious book! it is an antidote which destroys the poison contained in the Instructions to Confessors and Penitents, published by Orchi; what a difference between these two books! The practice of Father Liguori breathes a divine unction, we see in it but charity, gentleness, and moderation; the instructions of the other are full of harshness, arrogance, and fanaticism. In the first, we see the wise man who seeks the salvation of souls; the other is a haughty character who precipitates the faithful into despair. The one follows a method just and wisely reasonable, which smoothes the way for penitence; the other, on the contrary, creates but a confusion of extravagant opinions, which inspire an aversion to sacramental confession."

Alphonso remained at Naples during the month of August, and he might be seen in spite of the burning sun traversing the streets bathed in perspiration, running from the house of one minister to another, but all in vain. The opinion of Mgr. Galiani, the grand almoner, prevailed, and under pretence that the King in granting the exequatur to the bull would not be free to suppress the Congregation should it degenerate, the petition was refused. The King was vexed with the result, and took several opportunities of assuring Alphonso that he might rely on his continued protection.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The missions had become celebrated throughout the kingdom, and all the provinces, with the exception of Calabria, had benefited by the labours of the Congregation, when Carmin Ventapane, one of the first physicians in Naples, and a wealthy and zealous man, proposed to send the missionaries to Calabria at his own expense.

Alphonso who knew the destitution of these provinces, rejoiced exceedingly, for he had often besought the Lord to open a way for him into that country. After having arranged all with Ventapane, he had the pleasure of despatching a number of his missionaries to Calabria in November, 1756. The people and the bishops received them in the most flattering manner. They gave missions at Maratea, the country of Ventapane, and afterwards at Cassano and other parts of the same diocese, and when the course was finished, they returned again for a short time to each place successively, and those who had not been effectually touched at the first time were generally converted by this second visit.

Everywhere grace opened the way to penitence, and the greatest sinners became humble and contrite. Multitudes of women who had led scandalous lives repented, and some among them at the sight of their enormities gave themselves

to such severe penitential practices that they shortened their lives.

Among the numerous conversions that daily gladdened the heart of Alphonso, was that of a prince who had lived in open disorder for years. He came one evening to the church, not with the intention to amend, but to criticise and ridicule the missionaries. Grace operated in him a thorough change of disposition; he banished from his heart all disorderly affections, and publicly asked pardon for the scandal he had given; he broke the shameful ties that had bound him, and reduced his establishment to a single servant. This conversion was the signal for many others. The prince continued to live a most exemplary life to the last, when all wept for him as a saint.

While his missionaries laboured so successfully in Calabria, Alphonso was not less usefully employed at Nocera. Soon after their departure, invited by Mgr. Cioffi, he with fourteen others went to give a mission at Amalfi. God blessed this mission in a remarkable manner. Among others there were two suburbs in this town peopled entirely by women of bad character. These unfortunates were the ruin of the inhabitants of the town, and a scourge to all strangers. It is attested that every one without exception was converted, and persevered in their amendment.

Several gentlemen of the place had long had a violent feud with each other, that threatened to produce the most lamentable results; every effort to reconcile them had proved unavailing. Alphonso first reconciled them to God and af-

terwards to each other, and the reconciliation was so complete it was looked on as a prodigy.

Tambourines and guitars were common in the streets, and gave occasion to scandalous dances, which were characterized by libertinism and effrontery. He preached with such force against these disorders that the young people piled these instruments in front of the cathedral and burned them.

The women of Amalfi were not accustomed to cover their head before entering a church, and besides exposed their necks in an unbecoming manner. Alphonso reproved them for their immodesty, and established a complete reform, particularly among ladies of quality.

The young people were generally ill-instructed. He erected in their favour particular societies, prescribing frequentation of the Sacraments and other pious practices, confiding the care of them to the Bishop himself. Profane songs were no longer heard in the town or neighbouring country, but rosaries and canticles in honour of Jesus and Mary.

Amalfi was sanctified, and the good done was not temporary. The Congregation of Pious Workers, who long after gave a mission there, recorded that they never saw a town where the manners were so well regulated, an effect which after God they imputed to Father Liguori.

Many miraculous things happened at Amalfi. One evening while he was preaching in the church, he said, in his sermon, to excite the people to perseverance, "We are much fatigued in

labouring for you, but to-morrow as soon as we are gone, a devil will come down from the mountain, to destroy the fruit of this mission. Listen to me, and look well to it, for you will draw upon yourselves the chastisement of an earthquake." Accordingly next day a buffalo was set loose for the amusement of the people, who all ran to the ring, forgetting the warning given the evening before, but scarcely was the play begun when a violent shock frightened the whole town, and the terrified people fled to the church. The bishop ran hither, and while he recalled to the people the prediction of Alphonso, and the contempt for it which they had shown, another shock was felt, which was so violent that the flambeaus and chandeliers were overturned. The bishop himself became alarmed, and ordered the priests to give absolution to all. Thus the sanctity of the mission was confirmed, and a new testimony given to the truth of the words of Alphonso.

He passed from Amalfi to Nola, where he found the seminary afterwards so flourishing in a sad state. The disorders of the community seemed too great to be remedied. Many of the young people had given themselves up to all sorts of irregularities. The disorders had risen to such a height that when the subdirector in the absence of his superior had attempted to redress the abuse, they had formed a plan to get rid of him. In the fear that the evil would become worse, Mgr. Carracciolo called Alphonso to his aid, as he was venerated everywhere for the influence he had over others. He went, but for

several days he might as well have preached to the walls. The most awful truths of hell and eternity were but subjects of ridicule for many, who amused themselves by imitating the tone of his voice and his gestures.

The bishop was for reforming these disorders by gentle means, but Alphonso believed the case to be a desperate one, and that rigour only would be efficacious. "Mgr.," he said, "do you know how many bishops are damned because of the seminaries? This will be your fate, if you do not change your system, and employ rigour to banish the evil." He continued to preach, and what he could not gain by the energy of his word, he gained by the plaintive sighings of the dove. When the exercises had nearly finished, in spite of the ridicule which still continued all were suddenly seized with terror. Four of the most turbulent fled, others asked to be dismissed, and the remainder were filled with humility and repentance. A change so unexpected was regarded as the fruit of his prayers and penances.

The reform was general, he established for the morning meditation on some eternal truth before the Blessed Sacrament; he fixed an hour in the evening for making a visit to Jesus in this divine mystery. He invigorated devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, established a visit to her, and the recitation in common of the Rosary. The Christian virtue of mortification was practised in the seminary, and he regulated it with discretion. All began to frequent the sacraments, and even those who had been among the worst, went to

communion several times a week. He prescribed novenas in honour of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and different practices of piety. He also appointed a day for a retreat every month, to aid the young people in recollecting themselves and animating their fervour.

When the morals were reformed, learning began to flourish also, and afterwards this seminary became eminent for the learning of those educated there. Alphonso during his long life always took a deep interest in it, and if he could not go in person sent his missionaries every year to give a retreat.

After having accomplished the object of his visit to Nola, he went to the diocese of Cerreto. On arriving at the palace of the bishop, Mgr. Gentili, he requested a servant who was sweeping the saloon to inform his master of his arrival. The man not knowing him, and seeing an ill-dressed individual with a long beard, continued his work without paying any attention to what he said, and when Alphonso repeated his request he began to mutter in bad humour, "I must finish this," and went on sweeping; as he approached where Alphonso sat, he said, "Don't you see me here, why don't you rise?" Alphonso rose from the place without showing any annoyance, and when he had finished sweeping, again begged he would inform his master of his arrival. The servant, who had forgot the name, merely said that a poor man wanted to speak to the bishop; he was told to inquire his name and what he wanted;

but when the Bishop heard it was Alphonso de Liguori, he got up in a great hurry, calling first to one and then to another for different articles of attire, that he might receive him in a becoming manner. The valet seeing Mgr. so flustered, remembered how he had treated the stranger, and in great fear ran to hide himself. Alphonso desiring to say mass, Mgr. sought for the valet to serve it; at first he could not be found; but after calling him repeatedly he came and threw himself at the feet of Alphonso asking pardon for what he had done. The Bishop was astonished and demanded an explanation, when the valet with tears avowed what had happened. Alphonso laughed good humouredly at the affair, and the man ever after had the highest opinion of his humility.

Hardly had he taken breath when he returned again to Naples, but while engaged in labouring for the salvation of souls in that city he did not forget his penitents at Nocera, as the following remarkable occurrence shows. A woman whom he had reclaimed from an abandoned life, was in the habit of coming every Saturday for alms. This poor creature coming one morning to receive her accustomed alms, the porter told her she must have patience, for Alphonso had gone to Naples. The mendicant went into the church sad and disappointed, to recommend her soul and body to God, but while praying quite disconsolate at not having received her usual assistance, she heard her protector, who called her to the door of the sacristy, and gave her the

sum she had been accustomed to receive, and taking leave of her besought her to remain faithful to God. This miracle would not have been known, had not the woman on leaving the church said to the porter, "How is it that people call you a saint, and you have told lies? you have said the Superior was at Naples, and he is here." When the porter denied this, she said, "I know he is here, for he called me just now and gave me this money," and she showed what she held in her hand. The porter was confounded, and stopping the woman, ran to inform the Rector, who came with others of the Fathers to interrogate her, and convince themselves that while Alphonso was labouring in Naples, he had not ceased to be present at Nocera. The whole house was filled with joy, they carried the news to the noviciate and all returned thanks to God.

Towards the end of May the missionaries returned to Calabria, followed by numerous letters of thanks and supplications for more missions. The good that had been done instigated others besides Ventapane to assist in getting missions, and the Prince John Baptist Filomarino besought him to go to the more remote parts of Calabria at his own expense to evangelize his poor vassals. In the month of November two detachments were sent, and before their departure the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and Alphonso gave them his benediction, almost envying their happiness at being sent on such a mission.

CHAPTER XLV.

As we have already seen, Alphonso had nothing more at heart than to see the true apostolic spirit, and the evangelical poverty so much prized by Jesus Christ, and so much contemned by the world, take deep root in the heart of his Congregation. He detested even the shadow of property, and the free disposition of goods among religious seemed to him to be the bane of communities. On the 3rd of December, 1757, he wrote the following letter to all his missionaries:

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"My very dear Brethren in Jesus Christ.

"For the benefit of general observance I have found it good to lay down some general rules for your guidance as follows. And first, the Consultors and I have carefully examined in the council held last month, the question whether it be contrary to poverty to take charge of restitutions made by our penitents without an object assigned, but to be employed in works of charity at the choice of the Confessor. We have decided upon the authority of doctors and for other reasons, that it is undoubtedly contrary to the vow of poverty. Among the doctors there is Lochner, who in his Biblioth. Man. (tom. 3, tit. 112, Paupertas § 2, in fine,) expresses himself thus: "An. liceat, ab alio pecuniam recipere, vel simile quid, quod in pauperes distribuatur? Resp. Si ita

accipiat ut liberum ei sit his vel illis dare, tunc omnino contra votum facturum, si accipiat sine facultate (superioris), cum neque proprietas, nec usus illius rei independens a superiore cuiqam paupertatis voto obstricto convenit." The Father Rodriguez also says the same, (Religious Perfection, part 3, tr. 3, c. 13.) 'Not only is it contrary to the vow of poverty to render oneself master of a thing, but even to have the use or free disposal of it without the permission of the superior.'

"Azor again decides in the same manner, (part 1, l. 12, c. 9, vers. hoc posito,) and he thinks the sentiment common to doctors. Certi item juris est, (these are his expressions) non posse religiosum secundi generis peculium habere (that is to say, with the power of disposing of it at his pleasure,) nam etiam voto paupertatis repugnat usus vel administratio, a qua abbas nutu suo monachum amovere non posset. Religiosus enim nihil proprium habere potest, sed usus vel administratio, quam quis pro libito habet nullius alterius voluntati subjectam, est aliquid proprium, and it is for this said Azor, that the Council of Trent (sess. 25. c. 2 de Reform.) has enacted that the use of moveable objects among religious belongs but 'ad solos officiales, ad nutum superioris.'

"The reason of this is clear; it is that all use of wealth by a person who is bound by a vow of poverty, independent of the will of the Superior, is an act of proprietorship contrary to the vow.

"That being fixed, to deliver me from all scruple as to the oath I have made to permit no usage independent of the Superior, as also to obviate many other inconveniences, I have found it good to ordain, and by these presents I ordain to each and all, that all restitutions so received by our Confessors, if they are at college, shall be carried to the Rector of the house where the religious is, to be employed in pious works; and if he be on mission, he shall give it into the hands of the Superior of the mission, who shall use it with prudence for the expenses of the mission, or to give in alms; and in order to avoid all violation and all misinterpretations of the ordinance I give at this time, I expressly forbid Confessors to suggest to their penitents, to express their intention, and assign the restitution to this or that good work, for the penitent has no power to do so, and it would be eluding this ordinance."

He afterwards recommends exactitude in obedience. "In many points I am obliged to return to the charge of rendering obedience to me; but in that, my brethren, where is the character of the obedience Jesus Christ desires of you? What peace can a subject have who acts contrary to the intentions of the Superior? I know not how they can find an excuse. I fear some great chastisment from God because of this; it is but twenty-four years since the Congregation was founded; if this continues, what will it be a hundred years hence.

"With regard to letters, I recommend that

they never be received by subjects, until the Rector has first seen them. I say simply that he ought to see them if they are affairs of conscience, but in all other cases without exception I recommend Superiors to open the letters, and at least glance over them before giving them to the persons to whom they are addressed.

"I expressly forbid going into the houses of seculars without permission from the Superior, unless in a case of urgent necessity, when there is no time to demand it; particularly I recommend your not going into convents of nuns without permission from the Father Rector himself.

"I again advise you not to send members of the Congregation to pass the night out of the house; above all, if it be for several days, let them first give me notice if there be time to do so. I earnestly recommend that the masses be not said with precipitation; this is a thing which gives more scandal in us than in others.

"As to the missions, I advise first a retreat of one day each month. Never to ask for any particular food, and when there is soup and boiled meat to ask for nothing more. The observance of this rule gives great edification, and if we begin now to relax in that, in a short time we shall relax in everything. We ought not, particularly on mission, to talk confidentially or unnecessarily with strangers, but though reserved we ought to be polite. I recommend the modesty of the eyes, which is more necessary than

sermons; that in all the missions they hold the chapter; that in the missions the Superior appoint a censor, to take notice of faults, and report them to me; and that there be always a prefect of the church, and a prefect of reconciliations, and that he also takes care of persons betrothed, to persuade them to marry as soon as possible.

"I recommend to the preachers charged with the principal sermons, to make the morning and evening prayers as they are in the small book.

"Let it never be forgotten to toll the bell when any one is in the agony of death, that all may know a soul is about to pass into eternity, and may recommend it to God by reciting a Pater and Ave, and let the manner of tolling the bell be different, if the dying person be an ecclesiastic. This practice is useful both for the sick and the healthy.

"I embrace you all in Jesus Christ.

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"BROTHER ALPHONSO,
"Of the Most Holy Redeemer."

It was thus Alphonso animated and spurred on his brethren to advance in perfection, and attach themselves more and more to the Congregation by the ties of exact observance of the rule. His letters were not announcements to be fixed in some public place, and immediately after forgotten. He exacted the fulfilment of his desires, and informed himself through the local Rectors, and above all through the members most zea-

lous for the observance of the rules. The good were his consolation, and if he found any who were lukewarm or negligent, he corrected them.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Alphonso rejoiced greatly in the new field which had been opened for the labours of his brethren in Calabria. He saw in it a special disposition of Providence, in favour of a people so destitute of spiritual help, and as he could not because of his great age take a personal share in the work, he contributed all he could by his prayers, while he laboured for the glory of God in the neighbourhood of Nocera.

In January, 1758, he went at the request of Mgr. Rossi with twenty of his companions to Salerno. When the people saw him at his advanced age, loaded with infirmities, they insisted that another Father should take the fatigue of the evening sermon; but to this he would not agree. His voice was too weak to be heard through all the extent of the Cathedral, and notwithstanding the people were dissolved in tears, and the greatest sinners touched to the heart and deeply contrite came to cast themselves at his feet. One in particular, sobbing convulsively, exclaimed, "How should I not weep, I who have offended God so much, when I see this holy religious doing penance for

me!" Alphonso also reformed the abuse of females behaving in the churches as if they were at a public spectacle; at first his bold reproofs offended them, but before long they showed a better spirit, and a change in their whole conduct was the consequence.

For some time previous the most dangerous quarrels had been frequent among the nobility to the great scandal of the people; but he succeeded in reconciling them all, and in the end united them in a confraternity, under the direction of a pious Jesuit. It continued to edify the whole community until the suppression of that order. When this mission was finished, he divided his party into three divisions, and began to give spiritual exercises to the nobles, to the young clergy, and to the prisoners. Long after when Mgr. Pento had become bishop of Tricarico, he wrote in reference to this mission: "The benefit was great and permament, the conversions innumerable and astonishing, the aspect of the whole town was changed, beginning with the highest and going down to the lowest. The fruits of this mission were of long standing; I myself owe the grace of being enabled to quit the world to the light I then received." All agreed that greater effects could not have been produced even by the first apostles.

In the course of this mission, on the twelfth of January, Alphonso had the unhappiness of losing F. Xavier Rossi, the support of the house at Ciorani, and one of his oldest companions. But if he had reason to deplore his premature

death, he had more reason to rejoice in his dying the death of a saint. Although suffering from bilious attacks during eighteen years, he was nevertheless a model of obedience and submission to the rule; his union with God was admirable; to see him at the altar was sufficient to inspire compunction and recollection; it might be said there was no veil between him and his Saviour, so lively was his faith. The retreats he gave were so renowned, that many came to them from Naples to Ciorani. A mediator of peace, he removed all discord from his neighbourhood, and made harmony and concord reign in every family. The curate always had recourse to him in any dispute with the parishioners. He was also singularly charitable towards the poor, regarding them as his own children, and Alphonso, who knew the generous tendencies of his heart, set no limits to his liberality.

But so many virtues had to struggle against a nature extremely passionate; he had a continual inward fight, but virtue always predominated, and he advanced with rapid strides in the path of perfection. When almost overpowered by anger, he struggled so violently against it, that he would become yellow, and sometimes almost black; often it made him so ill that he was forced to go to bed, and had violent fits of vomiting. On several occasions when he foresaw the impossibility of resisting longer, he ran into the stable, and flung himself at the feet of the ass, humbling himself before the brute until

he could get up perfectly calm. His memory will always be blessed by the Congregation.

Alphonso was called to Naples during Lent, and he could not refuse; he gave retreats in many monasteries, but a circumstance which occurred in the monastery of St. Gaudiosa is too remarkable to be omitted here. The Father Galdieri, who accompanied him, desiring to venerate the blood of the martyr St. Stephen which was preserved there, Alphonso no sooner requested this favour from the nuns, than they went in procession to bring the precious relic and place it near the tabernacle. When the shrine was placed on the altar, Alphonso incensed it, and two minutes had scarcely elapsed when the blood liquified and became a vermilion colour, to the great astonishment of the nuns and all who were present, for this miracle was never known to occur except on the two days when his martyrdom is celebrated, and the discovery of his relics.

It was about this time that the same Father Galdieri was about to sail for Calabria, when the evening before his embarkation Alphonso called him and said, "I wish you would not go to Calabria by water, especially by this ship in which you have taken your passage." "But how shall I do?" said the other, "for there is no other opportunity." "Wait a little," replied Alphonso, "in a few days some priest or other will arrive who has travelled by land, and you can return on his mule." Galdieri obeyed, and in a few days a priest came from Mormanno,

and all happened as Alphonso had said. But this was not all; the vessel in which Galdieri had taken his passage, had scarcely arrived in the Gulf of Policastro, when she was wrecked, and all on board perished.

After leaving the monastery of Gaudiosa, he went to that of Bethlehem. Besides the sermons he preached in these monasteries and other churches, the crowds that came from all quarters to his own lodgings were without number. One evening it happened that he had still to recite his office, and also to correct some proof sheets which the printer waited for, when he was sent for in all haste to assist a certain duchess who was believed to be in extremity, and who desired instantly to speak with him. He returned the following reply by the servant: "Go," said he, "and tell the duke that I am prevented from coming, but bid him take courage, the duchess will recover, and I shall see her to-morrow." During the night, although the case was thought desperate, the duchess recovered.

In proportion as it pleased God to enrich him with his gifts he only humbled himself more and more. Invited by the provincial of the Jesuits to dine at their convent, he found himself the object of universal veneration and respect. These Fathers, being anxious to have something that had been worn by him, had recourse to the following contrivance. They remarked that his belt was completely worn out, and brought him another in the hope of retaining the old one,

but he, guessing their design, fastened the new one around him without taking off the old.

Mgr. Caracciolo having requested him to visit the young men of his seminary, who ardently desired to see him, he accepted the invitation, forgetting his fatigues at the sight of the piety and devotion he found there. During the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament sighs of deep affection might be heard without the chapel, and the confessors had difficulty to moderate the fervour of these young candidates for the ministry, so anxious were they to give themselves up to penance and mortification. Alphonso had no need to preach sermons to arouse their fears, but he spoke to them of the love they owed to Jesus Christ, and the graces to be gained by frequent communion. He spoke of the love of the Blessed Virgin towards the creatures redeemed by her Son, and the rewards she bestows on them who love and serve her. "My children," he said in his last sermon, "be constant in love towards Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, for by this means you will never sin, you will live happy, and become at the same time both learned and holy. Fly, as from a pestilence, all occasions of sin, for Jesus Christ and the Virgin will not protect the rash and presumptuous."

The inhabitants of Amalfi had been so taken with Alphonso during his last mission there, that they besought him to preach the Novena of the Assumption. He went, and as usual gathered much fruit. One evening at the end

of the sermon he prayed to the Blessed Virgin for all present, and then besought his auditory to beseech her to bestow upon him some grace. When instantly a bright light like a sunbeam darted from the statue of the Virgin and rested on the figure of Alphonso, who was elevated some height from the pulpit; his face glowed as if on fire, giving him more the appearance of a seraph than of a man.

While the missionaries in Calabria were labouring to scatter the seed of eternal life in that remote corner of Italy, Alphonso was not less busy at Nocera in preaching and writing. About this time he gathered together the most important maxims of our holy religion in a work entitled "Preparation for Death." It met with great success, producing throughout the kingdom the effect of a mission, and causing many remarkable conversions.

To excite a tender devotion towards the great mystery of the Incarnation, and to make its grandeur be comprehended, he gave successively nine discourses to the public, with meditations for Advent and the Novena of Christmas. He also published a Novena in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and considerations for the seven days which precede the Feast of St. Joseph, all of which had wonderful success.

The missionaries who had been in Calabria returned after a most successful career. The extent to which they were beloved by the people, may be shown by an incident that occurred at Saracena. A preacher who had been deputed

to preach the Lent, was requested by the regency to preach his sermon in the morning and allow the Fathers to preach in the afternoon; he would not consent to this, till the people carried away the stair of the pulpit, and forced him to agree. In many places the women passed the night behind the confessionals and in corners of the churches, that they might be first at the confessionals in the morning. There were many who remained for two days without returning to their distant homes for food, or who contented themselves with a small morsel of bread.

If the ministry had authorised their establishment, Calabria would have had many houses of the missionaries there. At Mormanno in particicular they made every exertion to obtain them, and the Prince de la Rocca used all his influence to have them at St. John de Fiori.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The fifty-eighth year of the eighteenth century brought a succession of extraordinary consolations for Alphonso. Many of the people of Asia, of the sect of the Nestorians, having their eyes opened to the truth, declared to Clement XIII. their intention to reunite themselves to the Roman Church, and be instructed in the Catholic Faith. The Cardinals of Propaganda, knowing the zeal of Alphonso and the devoted-

ness of his missionaries, asked him for workmen to labour in the salvation of these people. He agreed to their proposition, and in July of the same year wrote to the different houses to inform them of the circumstance. "Fathers and Brethren," he said, "a vast field is open for us where the harvest is already ripe waiting for the reapers to gather it. Cast your eyes upon these poor people, who weeping raise their hands to God beseeching Him to send you to them, to dissipate the clouds of ignorance which have enveloped them for more than thirteen centuries. They ask you for what is necessary before they can be received into the bosom of the Holy Church. There is justice in carrying the light of truth back again into those countries from which we first received it. If the difficulties appear great, they will bring you an eternal recompense. I am sure many among you will inform me of your desire to gain that crown which the Lord is presenting to you, and with which I hope to see you decorated in the celestial country to which we are journeying."

This letter was responded to by all; every one was eager to give his life for Jesus Christ. Thirty of the novices offered themselves also for the work. Some even wrote their letters with their blood, and Alphonso was filled with consolation at witnessing such zeal, and again wrote to them in the following terms:

"My dear Brethren, I have received your letters with much consolation, and believe all that you say. I have the greatest desire to see

our young men going to preach to the infidels and sacrificing their lives for Jesus Christ, but it is necessary that I be assured of the fervour and perseverance of each. For this reason I beseech you to apply until your studies are finished, for before your departure on such a mission you must undergo an examination at Rome. But above all, I entreat you to keep yourselves united with Jesus Christ. He who goes among the infidels, without being provided with love to Christ, and a desire to suffer, runs great danger of losing his soul and his faith.

"Those who persevere in their desire, will do well after nine or ten months to renew their request. Hold yourselves then united to Jesus Christ, and pray to Him every day that He may render you worthy of that grace."

This project however was never put in execution; the circumstances that interfered to prevent it are not known.

Alphonso was always anxious that his brethren should keep themselves in a state of the highest perfection; he seemed in that respect like those rigid creditors who insist upon an increasing interest from their debtors. He had extremely at heart the virtue of obedience, and although it flourished in the Congregation, and the will of the Superiors was law, he never ceased to urge upon them its necessity.

In the year, 1759, Mgr. Lucchèse, Bishop of Girgenti in Sicily, having heard of the good the labours of the missionaries produced among the people, applied to Alphonso to have their assist-

ance. Previously to this he had met with him in Naples, and had it always in mind to claim their services for his diocese, but he put it off from time to time, until a curious circumstance made him think of it in earnest. A swindling Neapolitan took advantage of the veneration in which Alphonso was universally held, to write in his name to different dioceses requesting pecuniary assistance, and large sums were obtained in this way, for he was careful to inquire regularly at the post-office for the expected supplies. On one occasion, however, he was forestalled by the lay-brother who had charge of their affairs at Naples, and who received a letter from Mgr. Lucchèse with twenty ducats. Alphonso wrote to thank him for his bounty, and thus the cheat was discovered, but the correspondence ended in the missionaries going to Sicily.

About this time Alphonso undertook with the aid of his missionaries a very important work. The town of Gaëta possessed a royal hospital for female foundlings, which depended on the hospital of the Annunciation at Naples. This establishment was by mismanagement reduced to a most miserable condition, both temporally and spiritually. It contained at least four hundred children, all ill-brought up; they entrusted the younger children to the care of the elder ones, and each of these latter, whom they called mistresses, had under her care ten or twelve infants. Although food and clothing were furnished from Naples, the unnatural mistresses kept all to themselves, and only gave to the poor little

creatures some miserable rags to cover them, so that they were scarcely fit to be seen; besides they were kept so disgustingly dirty, no one could look at them without loathing. Their beds consisted of a little dirty straw spread on the floor. Their souls were in an equally deplorable state with their bodies. They were not taught even the first elements of Christian doctrine; they had no idea of decency, and as every one without distinction had admittance into the place, they knew neither modesty nor shame; even the elder ones were ignorant of confession. In one word, everything about the place breathed only misery and sin, and this establishment, founded by piety, resembled a stable for the body and a hell for the soul. Different zealous priests had repeatedly striven without success to remedy the evil; and because of this some persons in authority represented the case to the King, who, shocked to hear of such lamentable disorder, and knowing the zeal of Alphonso and his missionaries, charged them with the reform, and gave them full power to arrange everything as they judged best. Alphonso shed tears on hearing of such misery; he accepted the commission, and arranging a plan, sent the Fathers Mazzini, Fiocchi, and Gajano as the best qualified to carry it into execution. They began by restoring decency, and clad the infants from head to foot; they took measures for preserving cleanliness, and sent to Naples for straw mattresses and beds. They walled up useless doors and windows, and opened others in less exceptionable

places, and it was no little labour to purge the house of its abominations.

The beginnings of this enterprise were very difficult, for the late directors of the hospital, seeing themselves about to lose their places, made the children dread the arrival of the missionaries, representing them as so many tyrants. When it was resolved that all should eat in a common refectory, where the mistresses would no longer have the care of dividing the portions for each, there was a general rebellion; the elder ones rebelled because they foresaw their profits must cease, and the younger because they did not know it would be for their advantage. "We will have no wooden bowls," they cried; but they soon changed when they saw the Fathers cooked the meat and waited at table, taking care that they were well fed.

They established in this hospital a regular order; mental prayer in common twice a day, the visit to the Holy Sacrament, and the recitation of the Rosary. They regulated the domestic labours of each day, as well as the exercises of piety. The elder ones were made to learn the principal truths of religion. They gave a retreat, during which each one set her conscience in order, and decided on doing the same every year. Many charitable priests were induced to give their assistance, in order to give a durable existence to the reform. And four skilful nuns from the hospital of St. Vincent of Paul at Naples, were placed over the establish-

ment to direct the children spiritually and temporally.

All this was not the work of months, but of years, and Alphonso often sent Fathers to this hospital who remained six months at a time. At length this asylum was converted from abandoned wretchedness into a little paradise, where prayer and mortification, silence and recollection reigned. All the virtues were practised by these little orphans, to the delight of Alphonso and the great satisfaction of the King. Many other good works, not less remarkable than the one here recorded, were undertaken and brought to a happy conclusion by the missionaries, which would take too long to detail here.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Alphonso had often visited the town of Nola, where he performed prodigies of grace; his last mission took place in the month of November, 1759. One of the principal military officers of the town had long given public scandal by the irregularities of his life, and as a last resource the Bishop and the Curate besought Alphonso to give a retreat to the nobles and the military. His appearance was then that of an old man worn out with labour and fatigue; his voice was so faint that he could not be heard in the cathedral, and had to go to a smaller church. The officer alluded to attended the exercises from

mere human respect, but before long his heart was touched by grace, he sought Alphonso, made a sincere and humble confession, and ever afterwards was the edification of the whole town. Another fruit of his mission was, that a great many young ladies took the vow of perpetual chastity, and persevered to the end. He established in this town a practice of ringing the church bells every Thursday evening to invite the faithful to thank Jesus Christ for giving Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

Always burning with the desire to save souls, Alphonso published about this time several works calculated to promote this end. Persuaded of the necessity of prayer in order to be saved, and the neglect of it too frequent among men, he published his admirable book entitled "The Great Means of Prayer."

This work is divided into two parts; in the first he treats of the necessity, the value, and the conditions of prayer; and in the second he proves that the grace of prayer is given to all, and explains in what manner this grace usually works in our hearts. This book may be said to be the essence of the soundest theology; it was regarded as a chef-d'œuvre by the most learned theologians of Naples and Rome. He dedicated this work to Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. "I dedicate this book to thee, O Jesus," he said, "bless it, and grant to those in whose hands it may fall, to love prayer always more and more, and exert themselves to excite in others a love for this great means of

salvation." Then addressing himself to the Blessed Virgin he says, "And you I pray you, give to all the spirit of prayer, and the grace to recur always to your divine Son, and to you who are the dispensatrix of grace."

Alarmed by the rapid sale of wicked books throughout the kingdom, which corrupted the morals and destroyed the spirit of religion, Alphonso addressed two memoirs on the subject to the ministers Brancone and Tanucci, beseeching them to prohibit their introduction into the kingdom; afterwards he published a learned dissertation entitled, "De justa prohibitione et abolitione librorum nocuæ lectionis." He demonstrated the necessity of interdicting the sale of dangerous works, and proved that the Church from her birth had not ceased to prohibit and destroy them. He replied to the objections of adversaries who refused this power to the Pope. The end for which he wrote was fulfilled partially at a later period. The Nuncio Galdure had composed a similar dissertation for the same reason, and as he was refused permission to print it, he complained to the Marquis Tanucci that they refused him what they had granted to the Father Liguori. The Marquis had not known of it, and displeased that such a work had been printed, he sent immediately the agents of police to the different libraries to seize all the copies. He severely reproved the Censor Royal, Sacco, and also the printer. This persecution vexed Alphonso, who represented to the minister and the other members of council,

that he had published the work only to obviate great evils, and without the slightest intention of giving offence to the King, for without regard to the prohibition of the Church, every one read the most poisonous productions without any scruple. This representation was as water thrown upon fire, producing immediate benefit. The incident made a great noise, and the book which previously had been little known, was so eagerly sought after, that they raised the price, and, to supply the demand, secretly printed many more in the course of two nights.

Although weakened by excessive fatigue and by many infirmities, Alphonso consented to go to Naples for the Lent, 1760. Because of his advanced age he was sought after with increasing avidity, every one being anxious to enjoy the last fruits of his zeal. On this occasion he gave retreats in several convents, and having often meditated on the sanctification of persons consecrated to Jesus Christ in the asylums of monastic retreat, he published on this occasion a work entitled "The true Spouse of Jesus Christ," a book not useful to monks and nuns only, but also to seculars; in it he treats of the practice of Christian virtues, and gives lessons by which all may profit according to their state.

To imprint still more deeply in the hearts of the faithful the passion of Jesus Christ, and to animate them in making it the object of their meditation, he published his "Reflections and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ, simply stated according to the Writings of the holy Evangelists."

To contribute to the satisfaction of candidates for holy orders, in whom he saw so many instruments for the sanctification of the people, he published about this time a collection of instructions extracted from the Holy Scriptures, the Canons, and the Fathers, by means of which ecclesiastics could give the exercises in retreats, and instructions on the ministry and on missions. In the first part of this work he treats of the sacerdotal dignity, its end and its sanctity, of the gravity of sin in a priest, and of its chastisement, and of the melancholy consequences of lukewarmness; he speaks also of sins against the vow of chastity, of sacrilegious masses, and the enormity of scandals. The second part contains different instructions on the sacerdotal state, above all, of preaching and administering the sacraments of penitence; he then enlarges on different virtues proper to the ministers of Jesus Christ. The third part contains the principal rules of popular eloquence, to aid preachers in acquitting themselves with success in the exercise of preaching and giving missions.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Towards the end of August, 1760, Alphonso wrote the following letter to his Congregation. He was then advanced in age, and it is the last letter he wrote previous to being made Bishop. His object was to confirm them more and more

in their vocation, and combat the temptation that some had to abandon it.

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"Nocera, August, 1760.

"My Fathers and my Brethren,—Endeavour to have always before your eyes the happy death of so many of our departed brethren, young students as well as fathers; and on the other hand, consider the unhappiness of so many still alive, who live, or rather, who drag on a weary existence out of the Congregation. And if some one among them, far from deploring it, congratulates himself, he is only still more deserving of compassion and of tears. Let us beware, because that faults multiplying without being noticed, have been the cause of their ruin, and made them lose their vocation.

"Let it be known to all, that I will never, and cannot in conscience give a dispensation of vows to every one that asks it, without a necessary and just cause; but this justice and this necessity is not to be decided on by the subject; for when he is under the influence of passion it is not he, but his passion who will judge, and therefore I renew the order formally and under grave sin, that no one leave the Congregation without my permission. Let each know, that if any demand a dispensation of vows without just cause, through caprice or passion, by that very act he renders himself unworthy of remaining in the Congregation, and can be justly expelled from it whether he will or not. You

all know the brother who has gone out without permission. You know that for many months he has lived, and will continue to live, in enmity with God, without being able to find any one who can give him absolution. This example ought to make those tremble who have any fear of sin. Also, when the temptation comes, be attentive to apply to those whom you know to be able to help you. Understand well, that the temptation against our vocation is for each of us the most hurtful that the devil can offer, because of its sad consequences. Therefore let each one of you, while visiting the Holy Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin, ask in a special manner for perseverance in your vocation. I advise each in particular, not to trust to his own good resolutions or feelings. When passion comes, light is lost, and every thing seems changed. To say the truth, I have seen enough in others to make me tremble for each one among you."

Desiring to see an absolute detachment from relations, he forbade all, even those who found themselves indisposed, to return to their homes for the reestablishment of their health. "If they go healthy in mind and infirm in body," he said, "they will return sick both in body and mind. Be it known to all, and you particularly who are still young, that it is a very grave fault to pretend sickness in order to obtain leave to go and breathe your native air. For all who live in community and according to rule, experience has shown that their native air and the home of their relations is a pestilential air, which weak-

ens their fervour and endangers their vocation; for this reason let each one know, that in cases where change of air has been ordered by the physicians, the Superior according to his judgment shall send him to one of the houses of the Congregation situated in another place, and let all from henceforth renounce the idea of ever going elsewhere, because experience has shown what temptations may be introduced by such indulgences.

"I would remind all, that it is not permitted to go into the houses of seculars, and still less of relatives, without a just cause and an express permission. Such is the rule, and I wish this rule to be observed with even more rigour than others. Only in case of the mortal malady of a father or mother, the rule permits a visit. But there have been several who in similar cases have sent to say to their dying parents, that their presence and their care were not necessary, and would only serve to increase their sufferings; and that they would recommend them to God where they were. They have abstained from going, and I have been greatly edified by their conduct; it is certain that on such occasions they have rendered themselves very agreeable to God by the example they have given to others, as well as by the mortification they have practised.

"I recommend to you again obedience to whoever may be the Superior of a house, even to him whose functions for the moment give him a right to command, were he the last of the brothers of the Congregation. It is on such occasions we

see who is truly obedient. I am not edified so much by the obedience given to me, as by that shown to a lower rector, prefect, father, minister, or those whose office invests them with any pre-eminence over others. I trust in the goodness of God that certain things of this nature which have given me much pain may not occur again. Obedience is the only thing which can preserve the Congregation, since it is that which inspires fervour. But obedience, I repeat, towards whoever holds the place of Superior, otherwise it is not done for the Congregation. Every fault can be pardoned easily but that of disobedience.

"The faults against poverty are not less serious. I recommend then to all Superiors, present and future, that when anything is given from friendship to a member of the Congregation, as a snuff-box, handkerchief, stockings, or such like, he be not permitted to use it, but that they give him, should it be necessary, something else of the same species; this precaution is requisite to maintain the spirit of poverty in its purity: acting otherwise would open a door to a multitude of inconveniences which would destroy poverty, that other virtue which sustains the Congregation. As to the habits, soutannes, and mantles, let the superiors be careful to have them mended when they are old or torn, and continue to mend them as long as they are capable of it. Poor Congregation! Shall I live to see the time when its members will be ashamed to appear with a patched habit! I hope they will not yet begin to complain of such a misfortune.

"With reference to the fathers who are the depositories of things necessary in the missions, let them not lock them up, either in the house or out of it, but let them remain open, that the Superiors may see every thing when they will, otherwise things might be kept hidden. I repeat my request, that all will consign restitutions made without a specified object into the hands of the Superior of the mission when they are on mission, or into the hands of the Rector when they are at home.

"I again say, and I repeat it, let all write freely to me without fear of importuning me, or hindering the publication of my books. I am bound as Superior to listen to conversations and to read the letters of the meanest brother of the Congregation, but I am not obliged to publish books. I can only employ myself in this way when I have spare time in the evening, after having listened to all who would speak to me, or replied to their letters. If any one notwithstanding, abstains from speaking or writing to me concerning his own welfare or the welfare of the Congregation, I make it a point of conscience for him, and I will ask an account of it from him at the day of judgment. I protest with regard to this, that if I were actually on the bed of death, I should have nothing to reproach myself with on this score. When it happens that any one writes to me or comes to speak to me on things interesting to himself or the Congregation, I leave all. I do not write with my own hand, because ever since my late illness the weakness

of my head hinders me from writing, and when a religious wishes his name to remain secret, I manage so that it is unknown even to him who writes for me; I address it myself, and when necessary, I force myself to write it all at intervals with my own hand.

"I have still a few other things to recommend to you. Let the mass be said with gravity and decorum. We preach to others and yet we put ourselves in a position to require warning from others.

"If a correction be inflicted on a member by the Rector Major, or by another Superior, let no one have recourse to captious demands to discover who the person is who has informed the Superiors of any disorder or fault, because by doing this they oppose themselves to the general good. The consequence is, that afraid of being subjected to indiscreet questioning, some abstain from telling the Superior what he ought to be told; this especially concerns those who are designated Secret Inspectors.

"I recommend anew, that when any go to preach during novenas. or triduos, or on any other occasion, they observe the same regulations respecting food as when on mission. I recommend this particularly to the one chosen Superior, because he must give an account for it, and on him the penance will be imposed.

"I embrace you all in Jesus Christ.

"Blessed be Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

"BROTHER ALPHONSO,

"Of the Most Holy Redeemer."

It was thus that, always vigilant, he recalled to his brethren the exact observance of the rule, animating them to the practice of Christian virtue. Not satisfied with these advices given in common to re-animate the fervour of all, he wrote to particular individuals whenever he knew them to require reproof or correction.

CHAPTER L.

When they had agreed with Mgr. Lucchèse on the arrangements necessary for the foundation of Girgenti, and had obtained the approbation of the council of Regency for the Infant don Ferdinand, Alphonso sent a colony towards the middle of September, composed of Father Peter Blasucci Superior, and Father Francis Pentimalli and two others. But the enemy of our salvation, foreseeing the defeats he was to suffer from these Fathers, determined to trouble the joy caused by this foundation.

They embarked under a cloudless sky, which promised a happy voyage, and the vessel was soon in sight of Palermo; but at the moment they were about to land, they saw themselves overtaken by a most violent tempest, and the vessel was thrown back into the Gulf of Naples, where they were forced to run aground. When the sea became calm they set sail a second time, but again a storm came on whilst opposite Palermo, which drove them into the Straits of Procida;

they made a third attempt, but the more they endeavoured to reach the Sicilian shore, the more the powers of hell set all in motion to oppose them. Again they neared Palermo, when a third tempest was let loose upon the unfortunate bark, which tossing from side to side was at length nearly lost between the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. The vessel was so much damaged that the passengers were hopeless of escaping.

All that happened on the sea was seen by Alphonso in spirit, and at the moment of their danger he was heard to cry, while he raised his tearful eyes to heaven, "My poor children! my poor children!" He approached the window, looked at the weather, and sighed, then turned away still repeating, "My poor children!" Those who witnessed this scene could not comprehend it, for they never doubted the Fathers had arrived in Sicily long before, and they said so to Alphonso in order to calm him, but without success, he still continued to sigh and to repeat, "My poor children!"

The tempest lasted more than twenty-four hours, but its fury was more felt by Alphonso than by those who were on the sea. On the third day the vessel with great difficulty reached Baja; their safety was an evident miracle wrought by the prayers of Alphonso. The poor terrified missionaries, more dead than alive, took the way to Nocera, and the joy of Alphonso may be imagined when he saw his dear children once more in safety.

Not doubting that this disastrous voyage was

entirely the work of hell, and unwilling to yield it the victory, the missionaries had hardly taken a little breath after their fatigues and dangers than they were again despatched to embark anew; but another annoyance awaited them. Two vessels from the Levant had been shipwrecked near the port of Messina, and for fear of the plague all communication with Sicily was forbidden, because the inhabitants of Calabria had collected a quantity of things from the shipwrecked vessels. When Mgr. Lucchèse heard of all these contradictions, he wrote to Alphonso on the 9th of November: "It seems to me as if hell were unchained to oppose this new foundation, because of the good it will bring to this diocese. Obstacles by land, and perils by sea, threaten to overwhelm all; but blessed be God, I will not cease to pray, and I am certain your children will arrive here safe and sound."

It was however a fatal voyage, and lacerated the heart of Alphonso. The Father Pentimalli, seeing it impossible for the moment to proceed, halted at St. Euphemia his native place; but scarcely had he arrived on the 10th of November, when he was seized by a violent fever, which carried him off in three days. This loss afflicted Alphonso deeply. Father Pentimalli was one of his best missionaries, for besides his rare talents, he had such power over the hearts of others that he could lead them as he wished. But his affliction was softened by at length hearing of the safe arrival of the others at Girgenti, and their joyful reception; not only did the Bishop

and chapter come to meet them, but the whole town, including both the gentry and the regular orders.

It was on the 10th of December the missionaries arrived at Girgenti; and three days after, Mgr. Lucchèse, impatient to give the inhabitants an idea of them, wished them to give the exercises of St. Ignatius to three hundred and sixty clerks of the seminary. When finished the Bishop wrote to Alphonso to express his joy at its great success. He wished them to open a mission in the cathedral, but it was not large enough to contain the crowd (Girgenti counting more than eighteen thousand inhabitants.) They afterwards gave two missions in the Church of Purgatory and in that of the Carmelite Fathers. The canons of the cathedral, full of admiration for the zeal of the missionaries, wished to have spiritual exercises also; their example was followed by the chevaliers and gentlemen, who made a retreat in a retired place by themselves. The Bishop afterwards desired to have a retreat for his family, at which he also assisted. The Fathers neglected none, whatever their condition might be. They went into the fortress to preach penitence to the military, to the galley slaves, and others of the same kind, and all reaped the happy fruits of their labours.

After the departure of his missionaries for Girgenti, Alphonso, like an old soldier who wishes nothing so much as to die sword in hand on the bed of honour, roused his remaining energies, and went to war against the enemies of his God

on the old field of Amalfi. The Almighty, in order to show the favour with which He regarded him, performed several miracles by his hand. The town was ravaged by an epidemic which seemed to defy the power of medicine. A canon who had great confidence in the merits of Alphonso begged Father Galdieri to give him the shirt the Saint took off after the sermon. He did so, another always being brought in exchange. On inquiring what he did with them, he replied, "During this mortal epidemic, all those who have put on Father Alphonso's shirt have immediately been cured." When Alphonso went to and returned from the church he was the object of such veneration that the canons were obliged to escort him to save him from the pressure of the crowd, who precipitated themselves upon him to get his benediction, while some armed with scissors cut pieces from his mantle.

The nuns at Conca besought him to come and give a sermon to their community, and during the voyage by sea they passed several fishing vessels whose crews had been casting their nets without success. The poor people complained bitterly of their ill luck, and besought Alphonso to bless the sea; and scarcely had he done so, when the fish appeared in myriads, and their vessels were loaded. To testify their joy and gratitude they sent a quantity to Nocera.

After finishing the exercises at Amalfi, several convents of nuns at Naples besought him to visit them. He accordingly went and preached

with great success. At the Convent of St. Marcellina he found one of the pupils, Catherine Spinelli, dangerously ill; he visited her when she was almost on the point of expiring: "Catherine," he said, "would you wish to die or to live?" "I wish to live," replied the young girl. Alphonso then made the sign of the cross upon her, and said, "You will live, but you must become a saint." She was instantly cured; after some time she became a nun, and attained a high degree of sanctity. On this occasion during his stay in Naples he performed many miracles, but those already given are sufficient to show the favours bestowed on him by God at this period. He returned again to the capital during the following Lent, when he gave a retreat in the Church of Purgatory to a great many students and priests, strangers as well as Neapolitans. He spoke with such energy on the great evil done by him who says mass in mortal sin, and the serious sin of neglecting the rubrics in the celebration of the holy Sacrifice, that the fruits produced were evident. They celebrated mass in this church with the greatest devotion ever after, and the rubrics were most exactly observed.

Inflamed with the desire of seeing priests attentive to the fitting celebration of the holy mysteries, he published during this visit to Naples a work in which he showed the necessity of observing the holy rubrics, recalling the fact of the church having made it a formal precept. He then gives salutary advices on the disposi-

tions with which the holy Sacrifice ought to be celebrated, and then follow devout affections and thanksgivings for every day of the week.

He published also a letter addressed to a religious on the manner of preaching Jesus crucified with evangelical simplicity, and avoiding the vain ornaments of a florid style. He could not endure to see so many preachers deteriorating the word of life by studied phrases and oratorical gestures. "All these puffed-up orators," said he, "give out but wind, when they think more of displaying their own eloquence than of glorifying Jesus Christ. If they escape hell, they will at least remain many years in purgatory to get rid of their inflation." He sent this letter to all the Superiors of orders, and every one admired the high degree of sacred eloquence which he possessed, and his extreme desire that all should practise the same.

For many years he had been invited to preach in the establishments for public instruction, and the effects produced among the young were very extraordinary. When he gave retreats all were filled with compunction, so that the cloisters were peopled with crowds of young postulants. Every religious order received its tribute, and the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer did not lack its full share.

Mgr. Carnovale has recorded, that having once been present at a sermon of Alphonso, while yet very young, he had said to himself when he heard his simple and gentle manner, "This is time lost; Father Alphonso deceives himself

if he thinks to touch rocks with such mild words." But when the sermon was finished, he beheld thousands weeping and sobbing bitterly; everywhere crowds of young men, known for their loose and irregular conduct, were converted by his means.

He preached penance in the barracks, and scandals disappeared. He put a stop to quarrels and blasphemies, and introduced instead the habit of frequenting the sacraments. He gave missions in different parishes. On one occasion preaching in the Church of the Holy Spirit, he suddenly exclaimed in a transport, "O thou who enterest here, and who flatterest thyself that thou canst be saved in the world as well as in a convent, unhappy that thou art, how far thou art wandering! but ere long thou shalt come to a deplorable end." At that moment a young Calabrian had entered the church, who, led away by his passions, had long struggled against the grace that had been calling him to a religious life. He applied to himself the words of Alphonso, and yet he dared to smile at the menace. But a month had scarcely elapsed, when he was killed by a musket shot. When dying he told his friends what had happened in the Church of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER LI.

THE veritable character of an apostle distinguished Alphonso above all others. He was jealous for the honour of God, and he was also all charity and love towards the sinner. God, to whom he was so dear, had adorned him with His most precious gifts. His zeal was extreme; if he learnt that in any place sin reigned and Jesus Christ was despised and abandoned, he could not rest until he had done everything in his power to remedy the evil. "What have we to do in the world," he often said to his brethren, "and for what purpose have we withdrawn into this Congregation, if not to devote ourselves to the glory of God? We are His adopted children, and more than all others ought we to fight in the first ranks against His enemies without anxiety for life or death, since He has given His life for us.

"The love of Jesus Christ constrains us, irresistibly forces us to love Him and make others love Him. If sin be not pursued by us, against whom shall we make war? It makes me ready to die when I see a priest indifferent about any thing that concerns the glory of God." God had given him a singular power over the hearts of men, and as soon as he saw a sinner at his feet, he hastened to imprint on his heart a thorough hatred of sin. He took, as it were, his heart in his hands to enlighten it and make it

comprehend the extent of its misery. "These poor sinners," said he to his brethren, "are that one dear and cherished sheep for whom Jesus Christ abandoned the ninety and nine, to seek it and bring it back upon His shoulders. If any of you are horrified, like the young Tobias, at the sight of some monstrous fish because it bristles with scales, bring it to me, and from the gall of its sins I will produce a sacrifice to Jesus Christ."

This charity was so great in him that he sought out the most abandoned, and rejoiced in bringing them to repentance. Some were filled with admiration at this, while others accused him of being animated with a false zeal, and too indulgent. He was however far from being so. Those who accused him were ignorant of the sigular gift he had from God, to touch the heart and excite compunction. There were many whom other confessors had rejected because of their want of good dispositions, who yet were received by Alphonso, and who persevered in their good resolutions to live and die good Christians.

By universal consent they regarded Alphonso as the greatest missionary in the kingdom; as preacher and confessor he had received extraordinary gifts from God. He preached no new or strange doctrine, but animated by the Divine Spirit he preached Christ crucified. This was the great book from which he drew wherewithal to instruct both the learned and the ignorant. He banished all vain ornament from his sermons, but he possessed the art of giving the po-

pular turn and expression of the oldest Fathers of the Church.

His reasoning was clear, and within the scope of every understanding. He expressed himself in a manner neat and concise, so that the most ignorant peasant, or the most silly woman, could understand him. In recommending this simplicity to his brethren, he said, "I have many sins for which I must account to God, but none for my manner of preaching; I have always made myself understood by my hearers." But while he descended to the capacities of the people, he did not fail to avail himself of the holy Fathers and the Scriptures, at the same time enouncing them in a manner to make the sense easily comprehended by the multitude. He cited many examples calculated to touch the hearts both of penitent and impenitent sinners, in order to excite contrition and move the most insensible. "These examples," he says, "make an impression on the people; they remember them and repeat them to their families." To lead souls to love Jesus Christ and devoutly serve the Blessed Virgin, he was accustomed to relate anecdotes from the Lives of the Saints. He never wished to inspire terror, but contrition; and even in finishing sermons on the most useful truths, he was careful to raise the courage of sinners who might believe themselves unworthy of the divine mercy. "We live in times," he said, "when to be a Christian some think it necessary to speak and act with severity, without doubting they are right, but they deceive themselves. To throw sinners into

despair by making the rights of God's justice prevail over His mercy, and fill their hearts with terror and lead them to despair, is the method pursued by the innovators of our age. But if the sinner believes his case desperate, instead of having recourse to God, he embraces sin, and throws himself into the arms of hell. God wishes that we may be all saved, and eternal damnation is only reserved for the obstinate." He never employed bitter invectives, or repulsive terms; his expressions were, "My children," or "My brethren," or oftener still, "Poor sinners." In this manner he performed wonders, the most hardened sinners throwing themselves with confidence at his feet.

It is a weakness in preachers to be satisfied when they excite their hearers to tears and groans. "In this confusion," said Alphonso, "the people cannot comprehend what the preacher says, and the preacher cannot know why the people weep." When he saw his audience moved in this manner he immediately stopped speaking, rung a little bell, and imposed silence, and not till calm was re-established did he resume. At Benevento the Archbishop Pucca being present at a sermon, remarked, "Father Alphonso has not said great things, yet his words are like arrows which strike the soul, and pierce the heart through and through."

Nature concurred with grace in rendering him an admirable preacher; his voice was soft and sonorous, and in the largest church every one heard him distinctly. He proposed the truth

with grace, and developed it with clearness; he was neither too long nor too short, and he managed never to excite weariness; people were always anxious to hear and sorry when he descended from the pulpit.

To the advantages of voice and manner, he joined a total forgetfulness of self, and this, more than all the rest, touched and attracted the heart. He always went on foot, when the distance permitted it, but if obliged to ride, it was on a miserable donkey. His food, for a great length of time, consisted but of a morsel of bread and two or three chesnuts or some other fruit; and on Saturday he only took bread and water. His dinner was most frequently taken in a corner of the sacristy; he has been known when on a journey to occupy the dinner hour in arranging affairs, and contenting himself with an apple or a little bread taken while on the route. Father Cafaro, his director, seeing him too much weakened and suffering from violent head-ache, obliged him to take some soup and meat, but he took so little that he rather cheated his palate than nourished his body.

His modest demeanour attracted every one; humble and submissive, poor and without ostentation, he had the appearance of wanting even necessaries; the sight of him alone was sufficient to edify. At the mission at Melfi a vagabond sought one of the Fathers for confession, who hearing that for years he had lived in a state of concubinage, told him that unless he broke those disgraceful ties he could not give

him absolution. "I come for the purpose of breaking them," he replied, "how can I persist in sin and behold the mortified life of Father Alphonso?" At Benevento during a mission he gave there the church was so full it was impossible to enter, and a gentleman who was outside was seen to show marks of extraordinary repentance. "How," said a priest who knew him, "how are you weeping when you cannot hear a word?" "How could I help weeping," he replied, "when I look at that holy man who does penance for my sins?"

But he possessed other gifts besides. The spirit of prophecy accompanied him everywhere. Penetrating the thoughts of the heart was common to him. The elements often seemed to second his wishes. His shadow, his clothes, put fevers and sickness to flight. By his prayers food was seen to multiply upon the table. He was told one day that the doctors despaired of Father Rossi at Ciorani; he wrote to him, "Invoke the peace of Jesus Christ, ask Him to come and bless this malady and chase it away. I will that you live and labour for the Congregation." This was sufficient, Father Rossi was cured.

Many times the Blessed Virgin publicly bestowed on him marks of her favour. He had ecstacies and ravishments in the sight of multitudes. At Amalfi on one occasion he was confessing in the house and preaching in the church at the same moment. When at Naples he was seen at Nocera. These supernatural gifts enhanced his reputation, and wherever he went he was received as a messenger from heaven.

CHAPTER LII.

Alphonso would not have his missions to resemble a fire of straw, which promises much and effects little. He was not contented with producing a passing fervour, but he desired that devotion should take deep root in the heart, and establish itself there in a durable manner. In places not very populous he remained often fifteen days; but in large towns he continued sometimes twenty or thirty days, that the faithful might be confirmed in their good resolutions, and grace reign where sin had abounded. His principle was, to have no other confessors during the mission but his own Congregation; for this reason he always took a sufficient number with him, eighteen, twenty, or more.

At seven in the morning he took his seat in the confessional, and remained there until it was time to say mass, and the evening after the principal sermon he attended the confessional for two hours at least. Whenever he went to give a mission, he besought the curates and priests of the place to abstain from hearing confessions for some time. He said that he who from shame had concealed his sin from his ordinary confessor, would repeat his sacrilege during the mission, for human respect would hinder him going to a stranger if his own director continued to hear confessions. But on the contrary, if all the

confessors were strangers, he would then go without fear of being suspected. At the end of the missions, however, he wished the priests of the place to help at the general communions, supposing that by that time the people generally would have approached the tribunal of penance several times.

He would not allow the missions to be given at the expense of the people, because he feared that those who superintended the outlay might be unfaithful, and exact more than was necessary, and thus the people far from desiring a mission might refuse it another time. Although he was in the greatest poverty, and had no other resource but the usual acknowledgment made for masses, he would trouble no one, and when he found it impossible to support the expense himself, he threw himself upon the charity of the Bishops, or of some rich and pious individual.

In order to render the mission imposing in the eyes of the people, he exacted that the clergy should come to meet them at the gate of the town or village, the church bells ringing to give notice of their arrival. When he arrived at the market-place, he gave a short but touching sermon, inviting all the inhabitants to take part in the exercises; he afterwards went to the church accompanied by the people. After having adored the Blessed Sacrament, he opened the mission by a sermon, and besought the mercy of God on the parish. He then made a retreat, and during three days his missionaries spread themselves through the streets with the crucifix

in their hands, inviting the people to assist at the mission.

After these three days, there was a sermon early in the morning for those who had to work in the country, after which the missionaries went to the confessional, some to hear the men, others the women.

When they had dined and taken a little repose, two Fathers went to teach Christian Doctrine to the boys and girls; the most experienced of the two having charge of the girls. Alphonso had this instruction much at heart, and employed on it only his most distinguished subjects. He did not wish that the boys should be present at the evening sermon, because their petulance caused confusion; he watched over their exercises, and had them in a separate place, and at the end of them a sermon suited to the capacity of the children was preached.

After Vespers the women came to the church to recite the Rosary in the vulgar tongue. The Father who conducted this exercise first gave an instruction, in which he showed how agreeable this devotion was to the Virgin Mother. He explained the mysteries with the indulgences attached; and recommended to all to recite it every evening with their family. When the people were reassembled another Father catechised them. He spoke of the most essential Christian duties towards God, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves. He explained the conditions requisite to make a confession valid, and showed the great misery resulting from null,

and above all, from sacrilegious confessions; he spoke principally of acquiring or retaining unjustly anything belonging to another. At the end of the catechising Alphonso made them relate to the people anecdotes of the miserable fate or despairing death of sinners who had made sacrilegious confessions, and to finish by inculcating the practice of different exercises of piety for the morning and evening. "Such practices," he said, "are most advantageous in turning people from evil, and cultivating in the mind the habit of pious reflection." He particularly exhorted mothers to have these practices observed by their children.

When the catechising was over, he generally took upon himself the principal sermon of the evening. He did not mount the pulpit in common use, but occupied a lower place, to be nearer the people and make a stronger impression on his auditory. Before the sermon he was accustomed to sing a hymn, to animate the people and make them lose their taste for profane songs. If the town were populous and the church not capable of containing everybody, he would, after having given the first impulse to fervour, open immediately a second mission in another church, or even more if the wants of the people required it.

He was no friend to vain ceremonies; he would not allow the pulpit to be decorated with wax lights, as was often the custom. Neither would he allow them to fulminate anathemas to rouse the feelings of the people. Such means he con-

sidered only calculated to produce aversion for the preacher, and fear in the audience, without either profit or amendment. Only at the sermon on death, he would exhibit a skull, while he made an analysis of human vanities, wishing men to enter into themselves, and recognise their own nothingness. At the sermon on hell he exhibited a picture painted by himself, representing a reprobate surrounded by devils. "Since men are material," he said, "they will learn in this manner to understand a little better the punishment of sin, and the hideousness of a soul at enmity with God."

He would not allow flagellations in the church, thinking these means more calculated to produce vanity in the preacher than benefit to the sinners. "They will pity the missionary," he said, "more than they will have horror for sin." Yet he was accustomed two or three times in the course of the mission to give himself the discipline with a thick rope, not to excite compassion, but to weep before God for his own sins and the sins of the people; he wished this to be done not by way of acquittal but in a spirit of penitence. He ordered that one of the Fathers should stand near the preacher to prevent any one pulling the cord out of his hands. On one occasion, the Father appointed for this purpose compassionating the weakness of the preacher, forcibly took the discipline from him. Alphonso strongly reprimanded him, and for a punishment forbade him to say mass next morning. "The pulpit," he said, "is a place of truth and not of ostentation.

We do not give missions to deceive the people, but to edify and convert them."

Two or three days after the mission was begun, when the women had left the church at the close of the evening sermon, the doors were shut, the lights extinguished, and the men gave themselves the discipline in common. All the Fathers assisted, and one of them took up the subject of the sermon that had been preached, and tried to inspire the faithful with sentiments of compunction, and dispose them to this act of penitence. Men of the highest rank might be seen mingling with the people in these acts of penitence.

The following days they heard confessions, but without allowing any one to approach the holy table before the general communions. He administered the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, first to the children of both sexes until the age of fourteen; then to young persons and widows, and during the three following days he met them in another church and gave them sermons upon chastity. To this succeeded the communions of the married women, who were previously required to give each other the kiss of peace; and in the afternoon he gave them instructions on their duty as wives. Then came the general communion of the men, also preceded by the kiss of peace. Alphonso was always careful to appoint a feast-day for this last communion. All the communions were accompanied with fervent exhortations, the bells were rung with solemnity,

and the organs sent forth their peals of joy while all the Fathers assisted at the ceremony.

Three days before the communion of the men, they discontinued the discipline in common. During the first of these days they endeavoured to impress upon their minds how much Jesus Christ desired to see men living at peace with each other, and how much He detested quarrels and bitterness. They exhorted enemies to be reconciled, and to sacrifice at the foot of the crucifix all desire of vengeance. The second evening they pointed out the enormity of blasphemy, making them in penance draw their tongue along the pavement. The first day after the general communions, the men remained in the church after the principal sermon, while one of the Fathers preached for about half an hour on the consequences of some sin, drunkenness, a passion for play, or impurity. He showed them the beauty of virtue, the benefit to be derived from the frequentation of the Sacraments, recommending them to be assiduous in observing the rules of the confraternities to which they belonged.

After these sermons on eternal truths, during the next three or four days an exercise of meditation took place, called, "The Devout Life." It consisted in the first instance of an instruction during half an hour, on the manner of mental prayer, showing its necessity and advantages. They afterwards made half an hour's practical meditation on the Passion of Christ. Alphonso knew how to speak so touchingly on the suffering of our Saviour, that his audience were melted to

tears, and as before they had wept for sorrow, so now they wept for love. To make them feel more deeply, he displayed during the last of these meditations, a large picture representing Jesus on the cross, which he had painted himself. This meditation was the most profitable of all.

If all were not entirely satisfied, or if any had need of more instruction on some particular subject, he prolonged the exercises on "The Devout Life." Then at the evening sermons he blessed the scapulars of the Blessed Virgin and the chaplets of St. Bridget, stating the indulgences attached to them by different Pontiffs.

Alphonso laboured during the missions in a variety of ways. After having taken a place by assault, he attacked all the forts in particular. Regarding the secular and the regular clergy as the principal portion, he put everything in operation to reform them. One or two priests converted or rendered more zealous he thought sufficient to sanctify a whole population. He gave them himself exercises in particular, and when in after years he was unable to do so on account of the fatigue, he always appointed one of the most distinguished Fathers for this office. He wished that whenever a priest or religious came to confess, everything should be laid aside that he might be attended to.

He did not take less interest in nuns; he always gave them spiritual exercises. He exacted from them an affection for the choir, and a hatred for the parlour; he made them see the melancholy consequences of correspondence with

worldly persons, and the peace which follows detachment from creatures.

He desired to establish in every monastery a community life in perfection, and he did so wherever he could. He was however of opinion, that when all were not inclined to give up individual property, it was better not to insist. "A nun who is unfaithful in this," he said, "is apt to induce others to be the same, and then she not only falls into her former state, but is the cause of disputes and scandals." In such circumstances he contented himself with animating them to a strict observance of the rule, frequenting the sacraments, and love of prayer.

He ardently desired also to reform the manners of the gentlemen, and render them edifying in their conduct. He was wont to say that all the good of a neighbourhood often depended on the gentlemen of the place, the people seeing and imitating them. He tried first to reconcile them with God, and afterwards with each other.

In popular places he was accustomed to give retreats to artisans and workmen of inferior condition. In towns where there were prisons, he also gave spiritual exercises there, and when they were not too numerous he heard their confessions himself, after they had been instructed by one of the Fathers for two or three days. In the first years of the missions, when he had not enough of subjects, he preached himself two or three times a day, but afterwards he divided the exercises among the missionaries. Then, having more resources with which to act, they were

taken by assault rather than besieged, which may account in some degree for the wonderful effect produced upon the people.

CHAPTER LIII.

Alphonso had at heart the words of Jeremiah: Evelle et planta, and not content with extirpating vices, he desired to plant Christian virtues in their stead.

When he met with a number of clergymen in one neighbourhood, he did his utmost to establish conferences among them, to be held for eight days, in which they might discuss difficult cases of morals, to animate the young priests and render them more skilful. He wished them on these occasions to preach and acquaint themselves with different pious practices in common. These meetings had everywhere a wonderful success. They tended much to the spiritual advancement of the priests, and became a subject of great consolation to the Bishops.

After the students, the gentlemen were particularly the objects of his attention. He generally established a confraternity among them, or if it already existed, he tried to reanimate its fervour. "They are," he said, "as lamps that burn in a dark place, which is the people. There is no weight that can counterbalance the good that may be done by the example of a well-behaved nobleman, or the evil that may be caused

when he leads an irregular life." He prescribed to them to abstain entirely from all forbidden amusements, but to visit every day the Blessed Sacrament and recite the Rosary in honour of Mary. He confided them to the care of a zealous priest, who could hear their confessions every Sunday and give them instructions, and recommended a general communion every month. He wished these confraternities to wear no particular dress, and he expressly forbade the introduction of any worldly interest.

In the country, if it were possible to reunite the inhabitants of several villages, or if the population were sufficiently numerous, he was careful to establish a particular confraternity for the artizans and labourers; but he would have it a simple reunion without any pecuniary contribution. Unless interest were banished, he believed they would neither find God nor find peace. These meetings were attended with remarkable success. Worthy men, to the number of a hundred or a hundred and fifty, edified everybody by their good example. The direction of the confraternities was confided to some good priest, and besides the other duties the members had to fulfil they were obliged to abstain from games and from taverns. On the Sunday morning they all confessed and communicated, and in the evening attended the catechising and other pious exercises. Every month they had a general communion, with a sermon to reanimate their fervour.

Alphonso took great interest in these pious

societies, and used every effort to see them established and flourishing. He had also much at heart the education of young girls; in every place he established a society for them, of which the people in the vicinity formed a part, and confided them to the direction of an aged and experienced ecclesiastic. They received every week an instruction on Christian virtues; the value of chastity was particularly pointed out to them, and once a week they received the sacraments. The good effects of this society were visible to all. In every church he established each morning meditation in common on eternal truths, or the Passion of our Lord; during the mass a priest read the points of meditation. He persuaded them to make this exercise in the house when they could not come to the church, and by this means souls were everywhere elevated to a high degree of perfection.

He wished that every evening about six o'clock the people should assemble in the church to visit the Blessed Sacrament and the most holy Virgin; he recommended this practice to the curates, and besought the bishops to ordain it, "because," he said, "Jesus Christ is the source of all grace, and Mary is the channel through whom grace flows." It is the common opinion that Alphonso himself has established and propagated throughout Italy devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament and the blessed Virgin Mary: there is hardly a church where these devotions have not taken deep root.

He desired also that every Thursday the bells

should be rung after seven o'clock, to invite the faithful to recollection, and recall to them the great gift bestowed on them on that day in the Blessed Sacrament. All were desired to kneel and recite five Paters, Aves, and Glorias, with the face turned towards some church.

In order that the people might have always present to their mind the thought of the death and Passion of our Saviour, he was accustomed to erect everywhere during the last days of the exercises on "The Devout Life," a Calvary in some place near the houses, and which consisted of five large crosses. This ceremony was very touching; Alphonso and his companions left the church each carrying a heavy cross on his shoulders; at the planting of each cross, they gave a pathetic exhortation on each particular mystery. This act was no vain ceremony for Alphonso; he thought of Jesus suffering, and was always careful to bear the heaviest cross himself.

Among all the means he recommended for persevering in a state of grace, the principal were frequenting the sacraments. He repeated incessantly, "Confessions and communions are the source of all good; they vanquish the passions, and fortify us against temptations; without them we fall, and throw ourselves over the precipice." He recommended weekly communion, and explained the dispositions with which it ought to be received; as to souls pious and exempt from voluntary venial sin, he wished them to communicate several times a week. If

in Italy the frequentation of the sacraments is in vogue until the present day, they owe it to the zeal of St. Alphonso de Liguori.

During each mission he was accustomed to give a sermon on the necessity of prayer, and its efficacy in obtaining from God the graces we need. He attached much importance to this sermon, and would never allow it to be omitted: "Jesus Christ," he said, "has placed our salvation in prayer; if we do not pray, we obtain no grace, and if the people do not comprehend the value of this great means, they will never love it nor have recourse to the feet of Jesus."

Besides this particular sermon, he was careful at the end of every discourse to inculcate prayer on the people, and teach them by his example the manner of recurring to God in every sorrow and temptation. He also suggested to them different practices by which to sanctify the day and hear mass with profit. "Pray," said he, "and pray much; if you pray, you will obtain everything, and nothing will be wanting to further your salvation."

Before his time missionaries were not accustomed to preach confidence in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. These sermons breathed only fear and terror. Alphonso introduced a new method; and the great fruits which resulted made it be everywhere adopted. "The innovators," said he, "proclaim that devotion towards the holy Virgin is injurious to God; they combat her power and the efficacy of her intercession; it is our part to show how powerful and how ad-

vantageous a thing it is to lean on this divine Mother, and how much God is pleased and honoured by our doing so." He exalted her power, and proved by the authority of the holy Fathers, that a true servant of Mary can never be damned, whether because she obtains for them all the graces necessary for their salvation, or whether that no one can be faithful to Mary without being faithful to God.

When he preached he always had at the side of the pulpit a statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, and at the end of each sermon he never forgot to excite the people to recur to her protection to obtain the pardon of their sins. He exalted so high her power and goodness as the Mother of God, that the most desperate sinner might have hope through her intercession. Experience has proved that the sermons on the patronage of Mary have produced the most happy results, that many sinners who had resisted grace, in spite of the most terrible threatenings, were forced to surrender themselves to grace after the most holy Virgin was made known to them.

When Alphonso gave spiritual exercises, either to priests or laymen, and more especially when he gave them to nuns, he was accustomed to preach a sermon on the love of Jesus Christ for men, and the ingratitude of men towards God made man for them. In his mouth this subject drew tears from every eye: he used to say, "he who is not touched with the love of Jesus Christ is either a fool or he has lost the faith." One thing he strove above all to accomplish, was to

re-establish peace and concord among the people. He regarded that mission a failure if there remained dissension or party spirit in the place. According to him, sin and the spirit of party were inseparable. He neglected no means for re-establishing union among all in general, and among families in particular, above all, where blood had been shed; and he gave himself no repose until he saw enemies reconciled and closely united in the bonds of Christian charity. For this end he set apart two of the Fathers to act in quality of mediators, and to devote themselves especially to this work.

The day of the benediction was a day of joy for all. He always reserved this solemn act for a feast day, that everybody might be present. In the morning all the Fathers attended to hear the confessions of those who came from a distance, who had perhaps not yet been reconciled to God. He had a statue of the Blessed Virgin decorated for the occasion, and removed the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows from the pulpit. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed and carried in procession, preceded by all the clergy and the confraternities, and when they came to the outer door of the church he blessed three times the place where the mission had been given and the neighbouring country. The Blessed Sacrament was then replaced, and after reciting a Pater and Ave to gain the indulgence, Alphonso mounted the pulpit and explained to each how to maintain himself in the grace of God. During the

benediction the bells were rung in all the churches of the place.

After having during the mission rooted out evil and sown good, Alphonso knew how to fortify the plant of salvation and preserve its fruits. The spiritual renewal, until then unknown, he was the first to introduce, for he believed it to be the best for attaining his end. It consisted in returning to the places where the missions had been given, some months after, but only for a few days and with a small number of companions. The preacher on that occasion generally took for his subject the parable of the talents, to show how rigidly God exacts from men an account of the graces He bestows on them, and the temporal as well as eternal punishments reserved for those who will not persevere in well-doing. By these means he animated the good to persevere, raised those who had fallen, and sometimes succeeded in gathering a stalk of wheat which had not been fully ripe at the previous harvest. Experience so fully proved the admirable advantages of this renewal, that he made it a rule for his Congregation.

CHAPTER LIV.

Alphonso used to say of his Congregation, "Our employment is the same as that exercised by Jesus Christ and His apostles. He who has not the spirit of Jesus Christ, nor the zeal of the apostles, is not fit for this ministry." Above all

he required humility, and said, "It is this virtue which makes us respected by the people; it is this which gains and attracts sinners, however haughty and proud they may be. If the missionary wants humility he wants all, and I know not whether the evil he will do will not be greater than the good he pretends to do, for how can God aid him who resists Him?" He recommended the greatest humility, and the most perfect subordination towards the curates and bishops, and principally towards the curates with whom they came in more immediate contact. "It is not possible," he said, "that God will bless our missions, if we fail in respect and humility towards the heads of the churches, and if we do not put ourselves entirely under them." Having heard on one occasion that a missionary had shown a want of submission to a Bishop, he punished him immediately, and sent him at once to make the fullest apology for his conduct. He wished his Congregation to practise humility even towards the peasantry, saluting all whom they met.

He had a horror of all species of display, such as going on mission in a carriage; he thought that he who is called to the apostolate, should never depart from the practice of the Apostles, and therefore that they should travel on foot, or on horseback. "Poverty," said he, "is a mute sermon, which has more effect than a hundred studied sermons."

He also exacted from his Congregation, humility towards each other, and more especially towards Superiors, whose will he would have re-

spected and fulfilled without delay. Every other feeling was pardonable in his eyes, but this he considered inexcusable. Resistance on this point was always followed by expulsion.

He was willing that every difficulty should be pointed out to the Superior which he might not have foreseen, but that it should be done simply, without the least intention of resisting, for he continually repeated, "If obedience be wanting in a mission, all is wanting, for disorder, confusion, and trouble must be the result; a vessel guided by several pilots can hardly escape shipwreck, or at least she will make a very dangerous voyage."

He would allow no superiority on account of long standing in the Congregation, neither on mission nor in the house, but he required the Rectors to give the preference on any occasion to a meritorious subject, should he be the latest comer. At the mission of Sava he had appointed Father Rubertis to be Superior; when another Father coming from Ciorani placed himself at the head on the plea of being the oldest missionary. When Alphonso heard of it he wrote that he would allow no such abuse, no such prerogative in the Congregation, and warned him never again to take such a liberty. He believed that such a pre-eminence produced the greatest disorders. "There are some," he said, "who are incapable of being made Superior even for one hour."

Alphonso required from the members of his Congregation a disposition for the ministry, but

he would not suffer presumption. It was enough for any one to push himself forward in order to be forgotten. A Father once complained that it was long since he had been appointed for the principal sermon in the evening. This was enough, he was not allowed to preach at all; and he was so vexed at the possibility of never appearing in the pulpit again, that he abandoned the Congregation. But if Alphonso never failed to put the presumptive in the back-ground, he animated and encouraged the timid and humble.

Another characteristic he exacted from his missionaries, was a spirit of mortification and a love of suffering. Without these qualifications, he considered them unfit for their employment. He required above all, mortification and austerity with regard to food. He forbade on mission any other dinner than broth and boiled meat, and as at home about three pounds was the allowance for six persons, with fruit and cheese. He expressly forbade the use of wild-fowl, poultry, or any other delicate meat. He forbade even on feast days all kinds of pastry or cakes. In the commencement of the Congregation, when their numbers were small, he accepted the services of zealous priests for the missions, but even these he subjected to the same rule. Father Villani, on one occasion when Superior of a mission, had received a large cake from a convent, and had no scruple in dividing it among the priests who were assisting at the mission, but when Alphonso heard of it he gave him a severe reprimand and imposed a penance on him.

When he was in the house of a private person he exacted the same rigorous observance. "Laymen," said he, "will not fail to insist and entreat, they will even appear displeased if you refuse them, but always decline; they will be edified by your firmness when they would have been surprised and perhaps made you the subject of raillery had you yielded." Men of the world pay more attention to what is done than to what is said, and above all they remark the conduct of missionaries. Alphonso however permitted that once during a mission they should dine with the Bishop when invited, and afterwards extended the permission to a prince or person of great distinction.

He would allow no one to have a preference in eating; he abhorred the slightest appearance of delicacy, above all in him who preached the evening sermon, whoever he might be. At the mission of Salerno, they had every day rancid cheese, and a Father took the liberty of asking that his morsel might be roasted. Alphonso reprimanded him on the instant, although he was an old man, and a most zealous missionary. "Let there be charity towards all," he said to the Superiors on mission, "but no preference because of any employment whatsoever."

He recommended, and rigorously exacted, that no discontent should be shown because of inconvenient lodging; he distinguished, however, between what was only incommodious, and what was injurious to health. "Health," said he, "is the capital of the missionary; if that fails, he becomes

bankrupt." But he allowed the Superior to attend to that, and forbade the others to interfere.

He prescribed seven hours' sleep in the mission as well as in the house. At the mission of Nola, one of the Fathers having incommoded the others by getting up before the time, as he did not require so much sleep, Alphonso reprimanded him, and made him do penance by eating his dinner on his knees. On the other hand, he would allow no one to remain in bed after the signal for rising. He regarded as a fault any one walking in the country during mission under the pretence of requiring a little relaxation; he considered the time of mission as a time of suffering, and he who had not the courage to suffer, as unworthy of being a missionary. He exacted from each to remain seven hours in the confessional, forbidding him to quit his place without leave from the Superior of the mission. He had the office of confessor eminently at heart. "The preacher sows," he said, "but the confessor gathers the harvest. The confessional is the touchstone of the true labourer; he who loves not the confessional, loves not souls, who receive there the application of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the merits of His grace. In the sacred tribunal, we gather fruit for ourselves and for our penitents; it is not so with the pulpit. If we do good by a sermon, a breath of vanity can make the preacher return with his hands empty. It is otherwise in the confessional, vanity does not enter there, but patience is necessary."

When it was necessary to visit certain persons

in their houses, whether to reconcile differences or confess an invalid, he wished it to be done after Vespers, that it might not interfere with the time given to confession, and he who was sent was always to be accompanied by another priest or a lay-brother, or some other respectable person.

He wished them in their intercourse with each other, to avoid all incivility or rusticity. "Jesus Christ," he said, "was always agreeable and obliging in His manners, affable towards all, and never rude or disagreeable." He recommended a grave demeanour which commanded respect. He disliked all familiarity or intimacy with laymen, and still less could he endure any species of idle discourse unworthy as it is of the sacred character of the ministry. "The people," he said, "look upon us as saints, but if we permit familiarities they will see we are but men, and with our reputation we shall lose the fruits of our mission. I recommend," he says in another place, "not to seek relaxation with any one whatever. It is necessary to be civil, but also to be serious with every one, that they may conceive and also preserve esteem for the missionaries, in whom they ought to find men holy and without reproach; this is necessary if we would produce good. When we hold too much conversation with people of the world, and talk of things not spiritual, we let them perceive in us a thousand faults which hinders the success of the mission. This is a thing of which I have warned you several times, but it is not sufficient-

ly attended to. If any one neglects to correct himself on this point, I will no longer send him on mission. I beseech you never to occupy yourselves with any matter not appertaining to conscience, and if any one think there is a case in which he ought to interfere, let him consult the Superior of the mission, as matters of this kind often cause great inconvenience."

He forbade all species of unnecessary visits, but he wished that on their arrival at any place they should call on the religious and civil authorities and the most influential persons of the place, to invite them to attend at the mission, as the being on good terms with such people was of consequence to the success of the missions.

He particularly recommended to them, never to inform the Bishops of any differences they might have with the ecclesiastics of any place, above all, if they were not public. Such reports, in his opinion, far from being useful, were prejudicial. He regarded that mission as lost when there was any disagreement between the clergy and the missionaries. "However grave," he said, "the cause of complaint may be, it is always worse to complain, for if it be suspected that the missionaries complain to the Bishops, it will hurt the missions everywhere. They should act in such a manner as will inspire a confidence without bounds."

He desired that in the course of the missions each should in their turn make a day of retreat, preferring the first days of the mission as being less occupied. "There is," said he, "a certain

wind in the midst of the world, which raises the dust and soils our clothes; it is necessary to use the brush often, or moths will get into them and destroy them. It is necessary to labour, but not to give all our time to it and forget ourselves."

He made half an hour's meditation every morning an indispensable obligation. He wished also a chapter to be held at the end of every mission, in which the Superior should declare the faults he had observed, and recommend all to acquit themselves of their several duties.

He fixed that during Lent, all the missionaries should retire to their houses to renew the strength of both soul and body. They set out on mission towards the end of October, and laboured (Lent not included) until the beginning of June. He required of each a retreat of ten days every year.

Although convinced of the necessities of large towns, he wished country places to have the preference; thus, when a mission was demanded for Naples and for a country place at the same time, he gave the preference to the latter, and went to Naples only after the country mission was finished. He delighted to hear of the good done by his missionaries in the deserted places of the Pouille and the plains of Salerno, the object of the Congregation being to help people dispersed through the country who are too often destitute of spiritual succour.

Alphonso was exceedingly anxious that his missionaries should preserve a good reputation.

He often repeated, "Confidence is everything for the missionary, if that be wanting, all is wanting. The priests in the country preach the gospel as well as us, but they do not make the same impression, because they have not the same reputation for sanctity. Missionaries will gather great fruit where they are considered impeccable, and if we astonish the people by a contrary conduct, the mission is lost."

When he heard of the slightest symptom of a want of edification, he could not rest, and he would not pardon it, whoever might be the guilty one. He would not allow any one to go alone to give novenas or other exercises, he made them always be accompanied at least by a lay-brother.

He wished that disinterestedness should be the rich crown of the virtues of the Congregation. He established as an essential rule that they should take nothing, least of all from the public, towards the expense of the mission, but that it should be made at the expense of the Congregation; and however great their poverty might be, he expressly forbade all to receive any indemnity that the charity of the people might offer. All he allowed was permission to state their poverty to the Bishop of the diocese in which they were giving the mission, or to some rich individual who took an interest in the Congregation.

Besides the missions without, he desired that spiritual exercises should be given in the house to young candidates for the ministry, during ten days at the time of ordinations, and at other

times to all priests and laymen. That this might be profitable, he exacted from the Rectors the greatest possible care and solicitude, and to appoint only the fittest subjects for this duty.

During these exercises he prescribed to them to submit to every inconvenience, to have in view only the glory of God and the good of the Church, to obtain which should be the object of leading to perfection the ecclesiastics who came to make a retreat. According to the rules he had arranged for these retreats, they had a meditation and sermon every morning; for an hour and a half before dinner an instruction on the duties required from each according to their state of life; in the afternoon a spiritual lecture, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and to the Blessed Virgin Mother, with recitation of the rosary; in the evening, meditation and sermon for another hour and a half in the chapel. The Congregation practised giving retreats, from its very foundation, and we have already shown in the course of this work the immense good produced by them under the conduct of Alphonso.

CHAPTER LV.

Preaching being one great means of labouring for the conversion of sinners, Alphonso was anxious that his Congregation should acquit themselves well in this work. In every sermon he desired that they should preach Christ cru-

cified; "he who does not preach Christ crucified," he said, "preaches himself, violates his ministry, and does no good." He required a simple and popular style that every one could understand. "The word of God," he said, "does not consist in high thoughts and sublime diction, but in simplicity and clearness, and the preacher ought rather to put himself on a level with the peasant, than with the learned and noble, because the former compose the bulk of the audience on missions." He compared to balloons filled with air those who, puffed up with their own importance, made fine discourses which they could hardly comprehend themselves. "When the devil would hinder the preaching of the gospel," he said, "he makes use of such preachers, to paralyze its effects. Miserable wretches! they will be condemned, not for having hidden their talents in the earth, but for having drawn no profit from them."

He insisted on reasons, and not words, and clear and solid reasons too. He disliked studied and far-fetched comparisons, but recommended such as were suited to the people. "Jesus Christ," he said, "knew rhetoric better than we, yet to be better comprehended by the multitude he has chosen ordinary comparisons in his parables: now it is to the multitude that we are called to preach; if the people do not understand, their will is not moved, and we lose our trouble. The end the preacher ought to propose to himself, is to persuade and to move. If the people

be not convinced, they will form no good resolutions, and they will not forsake sin."

He liked short and easy phrases; he could not endure prolonged periods, which required to be read and re-read before the sense could be caught. He wished them not to pass too rapidly from one proof to another. "We must give the people time," he said, "to seize and penetrate, or if I may use the expression, to ruminate at their ease on what they have heard. Waters precipitated with impetuosity do not penetrate the earth like soft falling rain. The people gather more fruit from a sermon quietly instilled into them than from a hundred others given with precipitation, so that the preacher only can follow the sense."

He wished them to raise or lower the voice according to the subject, as the only means of attracting attention, and to guard against monotony. He detested poetical and abstract expressions, and used to say, "What would suit Boccacio, will not suit in a preacher of the gospel, and many who study Dante and Boccacio will expiate their folly in purgatory." Not that he approved of trivial or vulgar expressions in the pulpit, but only that words in common use should be preferred.

He desired that the same style should be adopted on all occasions, particularly on the festivals of Saints, when the discourses were commonly panegyrics, rather than sermons. On such occasions he wished a plain moral discourse should be given, explaining and recom-

mending the virtues for which they were famed, so that the most ignorant of the audience should understand how to imitate them. "This," he said, "is the true manner of preaching and imitating the Apostles; it is thus all the ancient Fathers of the Church have preached, and it is thus we ought to preach if we wish to glorify the Saints and remain faithful to our ministry." He regretted to see men of great talent otherwise lose themselves in a labyrinth of figures and flowers to eulogize the Saints, he considered such orators as the enemies rather than the friends of the Saints, and above all, enemies to their own souls.

He particularly disliked the introduction of ludicrous anecdotes when catechising, because it amused the people without instructing them, and was inconsistent with the dignity both of the preacher and the place. If any offended in this way he called them to a severe account.

He watched over the young preachers with the greatest care. One Saturday on his return to Nocera from Naples, he was to preach the sermon on the Blessed Virgin, having vowed always to preach in her honour on this day of the week; and besides, no other Father had been appointed for the purpose; but being suddenly attacked by fever the young Father Alexander de Meo was appointed in his place. Not being exactly prepared, he enlarged on several learned subjects not suited to the people; he spoke of the times previous to the birth of Mary, and introduced the Sybils and the Argonauts. He

believed Alphonso would be unable to assist at the sermon, but he was mistaken, the Rector having been brought into the choir in spite of his fever. When Alphonso heard the words "Sybil and Argonaut," he became very restless, and turning towards the others demanded, "Is it thus they preach here?" They knew not what to answer, and Father Alexander went on in the same style. He rose, he sat down, he knelt, and then muttered to himself, "I must make him come down immediately." "Go," said he to a lay-brother, "and tell him to descend instantly;" and almost immediately he interrupted the sermon by intoning the "Tantum Ergo," to the great surprise of all present. But his correction did not stop here; on entering the house the poor Father met Alphonso on the stair, and falling on his knees, begged pardon. After having reproved him for the impropriety of his sermon, being not yet satisfied, he condemned him to remain silent during three days, and also to abstain from saying mass. In this severity he imitated the great St. Philip Neri, who several times in Rome made his disciples descend from the pulpit when they dealt in matters extraneous to the subject of their discourse. This reprimand was useful to Father Alexander de Meo, who afterwards became a model for the whole Congregation.

Nothing pleased Alphonso more than to hear his children preaching in such a manner that, to use his own expression, "they distributed

the bread of the divine word, without letting the crumbs fall to the ground."

When the young Fathers went on mission he obliged them to write their sermons, and revised them himself, making them learn them by heart and repeat them in the refectory, while he modified their tone, their pauses, and change of voice. He made them preach these sermons exactly as they had been written, until they had acquired a style clear and apostolic.

Some may imagine that with this simple style of oratory Alphonso would exclude the beauty of the oratorical art, but this was far from being the case, and he said with much truth, that simple and popular sermons required far greater knowledge of rhetoric, than pompous and laboured discourses, which never made the people enter into themselves nor reform their lives. "The less one approaches to the simple and apostolic style," said he, "the less he knows of rhetoric. The Greek and Latin Fathers knew how to adapt themselves to all minds and manage according to circumstances, because they were masters in this art. An ignorant preacher makes a sermon insipid and without charm, and instead of touching and instructing, he wearies the people and causes them to despise the preacher." But above all things he detested improvisation, the temerity and presumption of those who mounted the pulpit without having well meditated on the subject of their sermons. In his opinion, these adventurers were jugglers. "God is not obliged to perform miracles," he said; "on

the contrary, He more frequently confounds the rashness of the preacher whose sermon is negligent and without arrangement, permitting him to gather no fruit. These improvisations disparage the word of God, and far from attaching the people to the church, they prevent them attending to listen to ill-made sermons." He desired every one to make sacred eloquence his particular study, in order to attain the skill of a master.

CHAPTER LVI.

Alphonso exacted from confessors the greatest prudence and the most profound skill, as from their decisions there would be no appeal.

When after his studies were finished, a young student was elevated to the priesthood, he was usually permitted to hear confessions; but if Alphonso remarked in him a too great eagerness, founded on an idea of his own capacity, he kept him back, because this spirit unfitted him for the employment. He was particularly circumspect regarding those who heard the confessions of women, and never gave this office to fathers under thirty years old, requiring they should be men of approved virtue; but for nuns he exacted that they should be forty years old, and distinguished above others for their singular merit.

Alphonso inculcated upon confessors as the

thing most essential of all, to use the greatest charity and gentleness towards sinners. "The spirit of harshness and rigour," he said, "is what distinguishes the Jansenists, who do much more harm than good, and who certainly have neither the spirit of Jesus Christ nor the spirit of these apostolic men whom we honour upon our altars. It is necessary to show aversion for sin, but sweetness and great charity towards the sinner. An energetic word is sometimes necessary to make him comprehend the gravity of his crime, but this energetic word must not be repulsive, and before the sinner withdraws he must be calmed by kind words, so that he be at the same time full of hatred for his sin, and confidence in his confessor." On another occasion he said, "If it happens on mission that you feel yourself overpowered by bad humour, leave the confessional on the instant, because with your irritability, you will cause your penitents to commit more sacrileges than you will do good to them; say to the Superior that you are indisposed, and retire to the house. You will not lie, for a hypochondriac is more sick than most other invalids."

He desired that in the confessional they should preserve a serious and composed manner, joined to a Christian affability, and with women he recommended the greatest reserve. He regarded as a scandal having respect of persons in the confessional, all the world being equal before God. "Show charity," he said, "but not partiality. Ladies of quality will make way for

themselves, but it is not the missionary's business to take care for them; we ought to be equally at the service of all, and ready to receive every body with kindness." He would not permit them to leave the confessional to listen to any individual elsewhere. Neither would he permit any preference to be given to a gentleman. He excepted priests only, and desired that they should be heard immediately on presenting themselves, but in a convenient place.

When any Father went to the house of a sick female, he wished him always to be accompanied by another priest, and recommended the utmost prudence in his whole demeanour. He would not suffer the least shadow of gallantry towards any woman, and when he noticed a Father much sought after in the church he immediately changed his residence. There was one young novice whom he had been at great trouble to educate, and whom he loved for his excellent talents. When this young man was authorized to enter the confessional great numbers of young penitents came to him, apparently attracted by his gracious manners. This displeased Alphonso, who, fearing unpleasant consequences, wished to send him to another house. He resisted, but Alphonso said, "Either obey or leave the Congregation." He would not submit, and was expelled.

He exacted great circumspection in confessing children, enjoining that they should always be heard either in the church or in some public place; he forbade the slightest caress to be given

them. He recommended the greatest prudence in questioning them, for fear of teaching them any evil of which they were ignorant.

He also enjoined the greatest circumspection with habitual or relapsed sinners. "When with such," he said, "it is necessary to doubt their groans and tears; we run a risk of being deceived, for they weep, not from hatred of their sin, but to obtain absolution, and begin again on a new score." He warned confessors, however, against frightening them, and dismissing them with a bad grace. "If we frighten them," he continued, "and they believe themselves too bad to be forgiven, in place of amending they will only plunge deeper into guilt." He wished them to be received charitably and treated with commiseration, and while making them feel their miserable condition, to have them animated with confidence, and shown that a bad habit may be overcome by the help of grace and the most Blessed Virgin Mary's intercession.

He detested the custom of some who when they heard a grave sin at the commencement of the confession began to frown, and discouraged the penitent instead of trying to gain his heart. He wished the manner of the confessor to be affable and kind, and after the confession to point out the heinousness of the sin, but still with gentleness, that the sinner might accept the necessary penance with cheerfulness.

He could not suffer the idea of a confessor being shocked at the thought of hearing a very wicked individual, and who sought pretexts for

refusing to listen to such persons. He considered this a great fault, and insisted that they should willingly listen to all, and that if they could not give them absolution they should at least point out to them the means of amending, and encourage them to return to them again. He was especially delighted when he saw any of his young priests desirous to seek out those abandoned souls.

He did not approve of imposing long or difficult penances, because there was a temptation to omit them, and then the penitent fell again into sin. He wished penances to be short and salutary, such as visiting the Blessed Sacrament or the Blessed Virgin, hearing Mass, reading or meditating on some eternal truth, above all, the Passion of our Saviour, reciting the Rosary, &c. He counselled also the imposing of some mortification, but with great discretion. Above all, he recommended that the penitent should be made to return to the confessional after a few days, by which the sinner received new graces, and was enabled to overcome the habit of sin.

He was extremely anxious to animate the people to frequent communion, and to instruct them in the dispositions required for this Sacrament by the holy Fathers and the Council of Trent. "One may say," he remarked, "that the directors of our day place all their care in removing the faithful from the use of the Sacraments, as if, in order to go to God, it were necessary that we should remove ourselves from Him. I wish that the dispositions certain confessors exact

from their penitents, they would adopt for themselves, and then there would be no more than the half of them to celebrate the divine mysteries." He repeated often, that it was necessary to combat this impiety, and to show the benefit that might be derived from frequent communion. He used the following striking comparison: "When the aqueducts were broken, Bethulia was on the point of surrendering; in like manner, if we frequent not the Sacraments which are the conduits of grace, the soul falls, and surrenders to the passions."

One thing which he most tenaciously required, was that the confessors should be thoroughly instructed and directed in the true principles, without which they could not fufil their ministry. It is the right amount of instruction which enlightens the confessor and preserves him from a weak indulgence or an excessive rigidity, two extremes which are equally fatal to the soul. If he knew any one fail in these particulars he considered him quite unfit for the confessional.

Although he would not prescribe a system in regard to morals, leaving to each to judge and adopt what seemed to him most consistent with the Divine Will, yet neither did he approve of any one blindly following an opinion because it was sustained by some celebrated author. He wished that wherever the case was not perfectly clear, they should prefer reason to the authority of theologians. He exacted from his own Congregation profound and continued study of moral theology. "This study," he said, "shows us

our own ignorance, and hinders us from erring. The Rigorists and Jansenists of our day are ignorant on the science of morals, hence they are so extravagant and absurd. They wish to be considered masters, although they have never been disciples." He required from the young students two years' application to this science, under the direction of a special professor. He would pardon a less profound knowledge of dogmatics, because in a Catholic country the inconvenience was not so great; but ignorance of the science of morals was inexcusable in his eyes, for an ignorant confessor loses himself while he loses his penitents. He was not content with lessons given in common, he made it a law that each should make it a particular study, and that continually through life.

He was scrupulous, and even rigid, in the examination of confessors; and he would not confide this to another, but examined them himself, sometimes employing ten or twelve days, interrogating upon all they had previously been taught, exacting a most rigid account even on the easiest subjects, and if he did not think the candidate fully capable, he delayed giving him faculties.

In each house he established every eight days a conference on morals, insisting on it, in order that the exercise of confession might be practical. "Some," said he, "are excellent in theory, but bad in practice. They reply well to the questions put to them, and one would take them for doctors, but when placed in the confessional they confound everything and embarrass their peni-

tents." These practical exercises on confession produced the most useful results, both on young and old, and by this means they discovered the errors into which a learned and talented professor had fallen, a professor of morals. He did not hesitate to combat the opinions of Alphonso, condemning the wisest authors, and speaking of them with contempt. Fascinated by the opinions of the Rigorists, he had constructed for himself a most incoherent system. As confessor he lost souls, as professor he misled the young students. Alphonso laboured long to correct him, but seeing his efforts useless, he took his office from him, sent him to another house, and forbade him to confess. The unfortunate man was offended by the correction, not having the courage to suffer mortification, and haughtily demanded a dispensation from his vow. Alphonso employed the mediation of others to convince him of his error, but all in vain; at length he said, "My son, you abandon the Congregation, and you persist in your error, but tremble, for you will make a miserable end." He departed, but God was not slow in chastising him; in a very short time he was attacked by a horrible cancer in the face, and finding peace nowhere, he ran about the streets uttering cries of despair. He recognized his error at last, and confused and repentant he asked pardon of Alphonso. When about to die, he besought with tears to be reinstated in the Congregation, that he might not die a reprobate, and that he might be buried among them. In consideration of his condition, and

above all with regard to eternity, his request was granted by F. Villani, Alphonso being then Bishop.

CHAPTER LVII.

Alphonso desired that his missionaries should be apostles in mission, and Carthusians in the house. "When you are without," he said, "you ought to sanctify others, but when within you must sanctify yourselves." The principal object to which he wished them to bend their attention, was in all things to imitate Jesus Christ, the chief of missionaries, and to force themselves to follow his example. For this end he established a rule, that each month they should practise one of the virtues for which our Saviour was remarkable; that twice a day, before dinner, and before going to bed, each should examine himself on the exercise of this virtue. "The examination of conscience," he said, "discovers to us the stains of our soul. Frequently a room looks clean, but what is that, if on sweeping we discover a quantity of dirt. These returns upon ourselves are humiliating, they confound us, and make us form good resolutions. If we wish to progress, it is necessary to apply carefully to discover the stains of our soul."

Desiring to make great saints of all his Congregation, he incessantly prescribed to them humility as the foundation of all perfection. "Hu-

mility," he said, "is necessary in the mission, and it is necessary in the house, my brethren; humility at all times and in all places, if we would please God. Our aim in the Congregation, is to imitate Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ humiliated and despised. To this all our rules tend, and it is the principal end of our institute. He who does not propose this end to himself, not only will never advance, but will always go backward. He who has humility will have sanctity, but without humility all fails. For want of this virtue, Lucifer became the prince of the devils. It is humility which distinguishes the Catholic from the Protestant.

He wished that all should mutually esteem each other, and that each should believe himself inferior to his brother in talents and worth. The very name of self-love was odious to him as a blasphemy. "This accursed self-love," he used to say, "loses daily multitudes of laymen, priests, and religious; it sends numbers into purgatory, and many into hell. If this accursed spirit comes into the Congregation, better it should be destroyed. I beseech God to destroy it, the moment such sentiments are tolerated." It happened one day that a Father chanced to use the expression, "On my honour." This was worse than heresy in the eyes of Alphonso. The Saturday following during the conference he incessantly repeated, "On my honour." "Our honour," said he, "is to be despised, vilified, and, like Jesus Christ, the opprobrium of men, and the abjection of the people." He could not

calm himself after hearing a word like this, so inconsistent with the spirit of the Congregation.

From respect to the virtue of humility, he would allow no distinction of rank among the members, because of any charge or quality whatsoever, nor any particular species of servitude. All, the Rector not excepted, swept their own room, made their own bed, and served themselves in every necessity. He wished also that the Fathers should each take a week in turn for washing the dishes and waiting at table, putting their glory in the lowest occupations. He prescribed that the Rector himself should wait at table one day in the week, and the Father minister also, the latter washing the dishes. He desired that humility should be the predominant virtue in all. He arranged that before the evening prayer they should have half an hour of spiritual reading in the Life of some Saint, to serve as a preparation for the next morning's meditation. "You are men of prayer," he said to them on one occasion, "you pray like holy David, three times a day; let us see whether you lead a perfect life. The brothers lead a perfect life, if each applies himself to fulfil the duties of his office, cook, porter, or whatever it may be. The students, if they conduct themselves with humility towards their professors, if they study diligently with the intention of benefiting their neighbours. The Fathers will lead a spiritual and perfect life if they labour with zeal for the glory of God and the good of their neighbour, and if by their conduct they give proof of

modesty, humility, obedience, and recollection. If we are imperfect, I speak of myself the first, it is because we have not prayed well."

He prescribed to each a day of retreat every month, preserving rigorous silence, and ten days of spiritual exercises every year. "It is a great thing for us," he said, "the exercises of prayer and self-examination during these retreats, when they are made in a spirit of humility and with a desire of profiting by them. Prayer joined to humility is the great means of advancing, and with these two means we become saints."

To nourish the spirit of interior recollection and love of solitude in the Congregation, he ordered that after the mid-day recreation they should keep silence for three hours. He called this the little silence, because it was permitted during this time to speak in a low voice any necessary words. In the evening after the Angelus, with the exception of the hour of recreation, he prescribed a rigorous silence until after the prayer next morning, forbidding a single word to be spoken without the permission of the Superior.

He could not endure to see any one idle, or wandering through the house. His maxim was, that he who did not love his cell and application, could neither have recollection nor the spirit of prayer. He often said that a dissipated soul is a place open and unguarded, into which temptation will enter, and at the end of the day it will be found covered with a thousand stains, without knowing how they came there.

He wished each individual to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament once a day, for he who has a thirst for justice, and who does not quench it at this source, is always thirsty. He was careful that mass should be said with gravity and recollection, and that half an hour should be employed in saying it, after which another half hour should be spent in thanksgiving. Nothing annoyed him more than precipitation in saying mass, and yet he would not have it lengthened out to weary the people. "I have heard," said he one day to a young priest, "that you are for ever at the altar; this is not well. Henceforward I wish that you never exceed half an hour, and if you go beyond it, you shall be deprived of fruit at table for your penance." He enjoined on all to be in a special manner the servants of the Blessed Virgin, and every day to visit her statue in the church and recite a third of the Rosary.

He recommended by precept and example the spirit of interior mortification, overcoming passion and contradicting self-will. He established that they should give themselves the discipline in common every Wednesday and Friday, fast during Advent and the Novena of the Holy Spirit, and on the eves of the Seven Feasts of the Blessed Virgin. To prevent all excess in this virtue, and to preserve the health of the members, he forbade all arbitrary mortification without permission from the Superior and the Superior of the house. He wished also that every week they should have a day of general

recreation, in order that all might return to their spiritual occupations and studies with more ardour.

He banished, in the spirit of penitence, all amusements, however innocent, that accorded not with their state; for example, all kinds of hunting and play. He forbade them to keep any pet animal useless to the community, as little dogs, or caged birds. "A little creature of this kind," he said, "is sometimes sufficient to captivate our heart."

To encourage detachment from relatives, he forbade their ever returning home, except on the death of a parent. Neither would he suffer any one to show disquietude about the affairs of their family. "Leave the dead," he said, "to bury their dead. If they are rich, they will turn us from holy poverty, and perhaps make us lose our vocation; if they are in want, they will grieve our heart, and hurt us still more if we imagine we can do them any good." He regarded this detachment as a characteristic mark of a member of his Congregation.

He had a tender solicitude for the sick, even the meanest of the lay-brothers, but he would not permit any one to return home on account of health. "The home of our relations," said he, "distils no salutary balm for the health. God has given us different climates in the houses of the Congregation; if one is not favourable, another will be so; besides, we entered the religious state to suffer and to die." He looked upon returning to visit relations as tantamount to

leaving the Congregation. He recommended all the local Rectors to use the utmost charity towards the sick, and even were it necessary, to sell the very chalices in order to get what was requisite for them.

Alphonso was still more rigid about all sorts of correspondence, as we have already said. He wished all letters without exception to pass under the eye of the local Rector, and that he should be particularly careful to prevent any interchange of letters with any one whatsoever, except on useful and necessary matters. "We order the porters of our houses and all the brothers," he said in a circular, "to carry all letters to the Superior of the house or of the mission, except those which are addressed to the Directors or written by them; and when there are letters on matters of conscience, the superiors are to follow the rule of conduct laid down for them in the Constitution on this subject." He then adds, "If any of the lay-brothers should fail in complying with this ordinance, we forbid any subject whatsoever to open the letter which he may obtain in this way, or to send one without having first shown it to the Superior; we command the Superiors to be very particular in requiring the execution of this rule, and to punish its transgressors with severity as a point of conscientious duty, otherwise they shall render an account of their conduct to me, and be themselves punished, because this observance is, for many reasons, of far greater importance than it seems to be." It was a maxim of his, that as

death enters into the soul through the door of the senses, so the poison of the things of the world is introduced into religious houses through letters from without.

In the houses as well as at mission time, he detested all kind of intimacy with laymen, without there were some just cause for it. Don Gaetan Cetano, our advocate, who afterwards became a counsellor, often came to converse with our Fathers at Nocera; he one day asked permission to dine in a private room with one of the Fathers who was his intimate friend. Alphonso refused; for the same reason he forbade us to admit any stranger into the rooms, as he wished them only to be received in the places appropriated for this end.

While at the same time that he advised each one to become all to all, in order to win all the world for Jesus Christ, he also forbade any of us whomsoever to meddle with things foreign to his state, such as treaties of marriage, contracts, or wills, on account of the discredit which might result to him who interfered in such affairs, and of the annoyances which cannot always be put an end to between the parties concerned in such things. He also forbade us to stand as sponsors, which is a difficult thing in itself. He was not able to refuse to stand godfather to a child of the family of the Cavalieri; as he feared that he would not be properly instructed in his duties as a Christian, he was very uneasy about it; and when the child died, as he was not old enough to have

committed any wilful sin, Alphonso thanked God for having freed him from this responsibility.

In order to place a barrier against ambition, he obliged his subjects, as we have said, neither to aspire directly nor indirectly to any dignity or benefice whatever out of the Congregation, and he enjoined that he who received the offer of one should be bound to refuse it, unless he had a positive command to the contrary from the Pope or Rector Major. To prevent the Fathers from being taken away from the missions, he also decreed that they should not accept of any employment out of the Congregation, such for instance as being at the head of a seminary. "These situations," said he, "require the best subjects, and they who forget the Congregation and attach themselves to the seminaries, and the pleasures of liberty, and an easy life, cause themselves to lose their vocation."

He also objected to any of us being the director of cloistered nuns, or indeed nuns of any kind, whether alone or with another Father. A nun, in his opinion, might keep a director constantly occupied, without his even then succeeding in satisfying her. He also prohibited them from giving them the spiritual exercises except during mission times: he however latterly allowed them to give a retreat in a convent, if there were a reasonable cause for so doing.

He also prevented us from preaching in Lent, as it was a hinderance to the missions; he reasoned thus: "He who is destined for this employment, has to prepare himself for it, and cannot go on

a mission since he is fatigued already. But this even is the least evil; the subject who is out of the monastery lives in liberty, and when he returns there, one can see that he is less submissive and less attached to the rules than before. The scene is then a changed one, for if the subject has brought back money, will he not feel some sentiments of pride, and will he not put himself in the Rector's place, and as the latter is no longer capable of making him obey, will he not become himself the subordinate?"

Alphonso never approved of the indiscretions of excessive zeal; he thought them a cause of unnecessary pain to others, and he dreaded the odium that they might cast on the Congregation. To give an example, there was one diocese which was dissatisfied with its Bishop. Father John Rizzi's zeal led him to write to the prelate to inform him of what had happened, and to remind him of his duties; the Bishop did not receive an admonition coming from one of his own diocese in good part, and that lessened the affection which he bore towards our house. When Alphonso heard of this occurrence, he wrote to me, (for I was then the Rector of this house,) "Tell Father Rizzi that he has done wrong. He has acted through zeal, but he does not seem to know that we are forbidden to meddle with things out of the confessional, which may cause embarrassment to others. Let him abstain from such undue solicitude for the time to come, for the love of God. He must say three Ave Marias as a penance, and when his Lordship comes to

the house, let him go to him privately and throw himself at his feet, confessing his indiscretion and asking for forgiveness."

He especially wished that the subjects and the Superiors should be mutually affectionate one towards another. In order to obtain this end, he ordained that the subjects should open their hearts to their Superior with great sincerity, and this he called the reckoning of conscience. It consisted in the subject's exposing all his wants with filial confidence, while the Superior was bound to endeavour to meet them with paternal love. He especially wished that this should be practised when a subject was tempted or prejudiced in any way against his Superior. "This is the best method," said he, "of preserving union and confidence between the Superior and the subject." The students were obliged to give this account to their prefect every fifteen days, and the novices to their Father Master every week, because they are less experienced and more prone to temptation.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Poverty and obedience were the foundations on which Alphonso erected the whole structure of his Congregation; he said that if these two virtues always remained therein in full vigour, they would sustain it against all attacks, and that fervour would continue constantly to be on the increase. The rules which he had sketched

out on this subject at Scala, and afterwards brought to maturity at Ciorani, were all confirmed by the Holy See.

Although the members of the Congregation kept the right over their patrimonies, they had neither power to keep the revenues, nor to dispose of them at their pleasure; each one was obliged to give them up to the house to which he belonged, and the Superior made use of these revenues as he thought best for providing for the wants of the Congregation. If a sum of money was sent to any one in his capacity of member of the Congregation, whether as alms, as a gift, or as a return for some benefit received, he was obliged to place it in the hands of the Superior immediately, who had full power to dispose of it as he pleased. By these regulations cupidity had nothing to desire, and the soul was freed from all temporal cares.

As Alphonso was so convinced of the excellence of poverty, he wished all the Superiors to watch over its preservation with scrupulous exactitude; and in order that no laxity should be at any time introduced into the Congregation on this point, he decreed that whoever should be found to have transgressed against this rule should be expelled, whoever he might happen to be, and that if the Rector Major himself were convicted of having permitted any innovation contrary to poverty, he should be deposed from his office, and should be from that time deprived of a deliberative voice in the general and private chapters.

All that was made use of by the subjects was obliged to be in accordance with poverty. He forbade the use of silk and of all which breathed of vanity or elegance, as well as everything in gold or silver, for any but church purposes. The cassocks and cloaks were of simple serge or ordinary cloth; the stockings were coarse and common, and the shoes quite plain and without ornament. No other cane but a simple stick was permitted, and it was to be one such as is cut in a wood, and without a knob or handle. The spoons and the forks were of iron, the drinking vessels, the plates and dishes, of common earthenware, as well as every other utensil for the use of the community. The rooms were poor; they contained no kind of closet or chest of drawers, but merely a table with an open drawer, three chairs at most, a lamp of earthenware, four rude prints and two or three books. The linen, which was of coarse make and all alike, was entrusted to the charge of one of the brothers for the use of the whole house. The beds were composed of a single palliass, without a mattrass; there was a pillow of common linen however, and sheets. We were forbidden to possess any book as our own, and so we were obliged to be satisfied with those which there were in the common library. Even a needle, or a bit of thread, could not be kept as any one's private property; such things were to be found in a fixed place and at the disposal of all.

Magnificence was prohibited in our houses; it was decreed that the cells should be six feet

long and eight in breadth, and that the corridors should be five in breadth; outside balconies were interdicted as well as tapestries in the rooms and in the corridors. Instead of panes of glass, we had oiled paper at first for the small windows; the large ones were shut with canvass; but, as it prevented our having light enough for studying, Alphonso permitted four little squares to be put in the rooms. Although all about us had an air of poverty and misery, it was still too sumptuous for Alphonso, who forgot the magnificence and the grandeurs of the world, and had only St. Peter of Alcantara's cave before his eyes.

After he had banished the words "mine" and "thine" from the Congregation, and freed the subjects from the difficulties of possessing and disposing of any thing, he established a life in which all was perfectly in common amongst us all, and free from any kind of distinction; he loved poverty, but he loved a life in common still more, or to speak more justly, they were two precious stones which were equally dear to his heart. "If there is not a life of perfect community in all things," he said, "anxiety and envy will not fail to torment us. If one amongst us has most power, it will soon excite the jealousy of the others, and how many evils will not this cause to religious? He who has less will not fail to procure what he believes himself to stand in need of, even if he is forced to do it by unlawful methods." Alphonso was so careful in maintaining the having of all things in common, that if he saw

that any Superior was negligent in procuring what was necessary for the subjects, he became excited by a holy zeal, reprimanded him, and even chastised him for it. Charity and community were synonymous with Alphonso.

He wished that poverty should reign amongst his sons, but not such a degree of misery as to be contrary to decency. One day he saw a young clerk in a pair of shoes which were thoroughly worn out; he did not speak, but he cast such looks at the shoes and on the Superior, that he immediately understood his meaning.

When a father or a brother left one house to go into another, he was obliged to be furnished with what he required. Alphonso several times gave very severe reprimands to Superiors whom he found wanting in this respect. "Charity," said he, "maintains the life in common, and the life in community keeps up poverty. If charity fails, all is overthrown." He was particularly dissatisfied when he saw a Superior act with indulgence towards himself and severity towards others. "Oh," he exclaimed, "how many Superiors will be damned at the day of judgment for having themselves violated the law of poverty and given a blow to the charity of community life in others!"

Although poverty and life in community mutually protect each other, as he said, experience caused him to see that living in common might receive a blow without poverty being apparently injured. "Although certain favours for the aged," said he, "and certain permissions extort-

ed from the weakness rather than from the will of Superiors, do not seem to militate against poverty, and though they are not made use of without their consent, they are nevertheless abuses which afterwards become laws, to the great injury of poverty, and still more of living with all things in common." In order to prevent all possible relaxation in regard to either of these virtues, he decreed that the Rectors, without even excepting the chief Superior, should bind themselves by a special oath not to grant any subject leave to keep money for his private use, or to dispose of it according to his own will, for any reason whatsoever; he also ordered that money given by the house to supply the expenses of a journey should not be put to any other use but that for which it was given.

As the law of poverty and of life in community might be violated in consequence of dispensations granted to the sick to keep eatables in their room, Alphonso required the Superiors to take an oath not to permit any one to keep sweet things in his room for his own use, such as syrups, pastry, chocolate, or even tobacco, and such like things. They were all only to be supplied as they were wanted at the time, and by him who had charge of these things. In order to guard against any abuse on the part of the Superiors themselves, Alphonso forbade them to keep anything in their rooms for their own use, whether money or eatables, and he ordered that each one should deliver over to the community all that was sent to him or for any one else. He wished that this oath

should be taken by each Superior on the day he entered into office, in presence of the community, and the chapter if it was the Rector Major, and Alphonso himself did so in Oct. 1755.*

The idea of this oath proceeded from Cardinal Spinelli, who when he sent his testimony to the Pope for the approbation of the rule, did not approve of the Rector Major being deposed if he introduced any innovation against holy poverty, as such a regulation would cause lawsuits and divisions; and proposed that this oath should be framed, to serve as a bulwark to poverty and life in community: "Utilius videtur sanciri," are his words, "ut rectores omnes, atque adeo Rector Major, in suscipiendo munere jurare debeant coram universa familia, se nunquam permissuros, qualibet de causa, congregationis alumnis ut possint arbitrio suo vel minimum pecuniæ erogare,

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* The following is the formula of the oath: "I, N. N., Superior of the house, N. N., promise on oath, and bind myself under serious penalties towards the Divine Majesty, not to allow any subject of this house, for any reason whatsoever, to keep any sum of money for his use, and at his own free disposal; also not to permit any one to keep any eatables in his room, such as fruit, cakes, syrups, chocolate, pastry, or tobacco, or such things, which in case of necessity will be furnished by the infirmarian or some one else appointed to this office. I also bind myself by this oath not to keep any of the said things for my own use, that is to say, money or eatables, and to give up whatever may be sent to me, or to any subject whatsoever, to the community, after the thing has been accepted. This oath however does not bind me for the time when the subjects may be out of the house for missions, novenas, the spiritual exercises and such like. Finally, in case the subjects are obliged to leave the house for some other case of necessity, I bind myself not to allow them to go to any other expense than is requisite for their food or for some other reasonable want. May God aid me in this, and his holy angels."

nec rei cujuscumque privatum usum habere, eam veluti propriam possidendo." The Cardinal's auditor, Bisozzi, did not agree with his eminence; but, as Alphonso saw that this oath would prevent abuses, and that the remedy would be useless after the evil arrived, he felt that he ought to subscribe to it, and proposed it to those belonging to him as the most sure and prompt precaution to guard against all possible relaxation in the Congregation.

We have seen the conduct which Alphonso prescribed to the confessors in regard to uncertain restitutions. In order to prevent everything that might become an occasion of sinning against the law of poverty and of violating the equality of life in common, he also forbade them to receive money from their penitents to distribute in alms as they might think best, the power of exercising their own will as to the distribution of money seeming to him contrary to the vow of poverty. "For it is not right," said he, "that one who has made this vow should have any property or the use of any, without being bound to submission to the will of the Superior." This circular of 1757 shows how scrupulous he was on this point; it was intended to exclude a multitude of inconveniences of which he discerned the fatal effects.

He did not labour less carefully to strengthen the holy virtue of obedience. He decreed that the subjects should have no will of their own, but that they should place themselves entirely in the hands of their Superiors. "*I will*," or "*I will*

not," were expressions which he heard with horror. "Why have we entered into the Congregation, if it is not to please God and fulfil His holy will? And how can we please God and do His holy will, if we refuse to submit to the will of the Superiors, who are God's deputies on earth? Answer not therefore, that you do not ever dispute a Superior's orders. The smallest want of obedience is a serious fault, and deserves to be very severely punished. 'All the members of the Congregation, whoever they may be, ought to have the greatest respect for the Superiors,' says the rule; 'they must never excuse themselves or defend themselves before them; they shall receive their admonitions with humility.'" He however granted, and even wished, that if any one had any reason to object to anything, he should mention it, but with submission; and after having made it known he then required him to submit to all that should be required of him.

CHAPTER LIX.

Alphonso was not one of those who ordered things without causing them to be executed; he required the smallest portions of the rule to be rigorously observed. Slow to command, he was urgent when it was necessary to obtain obedience; and although every other fault found mercy before him, his severity was great when even a

slight deviation against poverty or obedience was concerned; his zeal then became kindled, without any respect of persons. He heard that Father Carmen Fiocchi had caused pewter dishes to be used in the house at Iliceto in place of earthenware ones; he immediately wrote to him to say that he must sell all these dishes. It was in vain that various reasons for keeping them were alleged, and that he was told that as earthenware dishes easily broke, and the house was far from a pottery, they occasioned great expense every year. "Poverty," he replied, "thinks of the quality of things; and that which suits it best is that which is the vilest and coarsest. There is no example of such vanity, even in less austere orders; he who is poor and professes poverty, ought to be poor in all things."

Father don Paul Cafaro's very exact observance of the rule of poverty is well known; however even he could not escape Alphonso's censure. He was at that time the Superior at Caposeli. Once when Alphonso went to visit this house, he noticed that the casements of the windows were of stone instead of brick as he wished; he sharply reproved Father Cafaro about it, but the building was too far advanced to be able to change it.

When he was at Iliceto he heard (but it was a false report) that Father Sportelli, the Superior at Nocera, had put ornaments on the doors of the rooms of that house. These tidings troubled Alphonso, and he resolved to go and have them taken down himself. He went there, but he saw

that what he had been told was not the case: Father Sportelli was too great a lover of evangelical poverty to transgress it. The whole affair consisted in a little moulding on the exterior traverse of the doors of the cells: even that was forbidden, and Alphonso ordered that this cross-piece should in future be placed on the interior of the doors, and that it should be merely a simple piece of plain wood; and it is thus to the present day. Father Sportelli asked if he approved of a cornice which had been commenced under the edge of the roof; but Alphonso blamed this as a luxury; he wished that nothing but the unpolished stones should be seen on the exterior of the buildings; and at the present day the houses of our order are built quite as simply as they were then.

While Father Gaspard Cajone was Superior of the house at Caposeli, the choir of the church was put in order, and a library was placed in the study of this monastery. The brother-joiner put little cornices on the stalls in the choir and round the upper part of the library. Alphonso no sooner heard of these trifling ornaments than he wrote to Father Cajone in a tone of great reproof. "You ought to know," he said to him, "that I do not choose to have any ornaments, either in the choir or in the studies. You must submit to this. If you have put any you must take them away, and let all be quite simple. Poverty loves what is simple and necessary, but not what is superfluous." He was obliged therefore to obey, and to take away all that had been

put, which after all was but the most simple decoration possible.

At Nocera the common rooms were well built and with some appearance of neatness; when it was proposed to put doors to them, Alphonso sent for the Father Minister, Dominic Corsana, and said to him with all possible seriousness, "These doors must be such that on seeing them it may be said that it was impossible to make poorer ones." He wished that they should therefore be made of the bark of poplar-wood, as if he had no other method of showing forth poverty.

At this house at Nocera the same Father Corsana had according to custom caused a border of a dark colour to be put round the bottom of the walls of the corridors, with burnt straw and lime, but when Alphonso saw it he was quite alarmed, and felt as if it were a thing which could not be permitted, and he would certainly have caused it to be done away with if the Fathers had not assured him that in sweeping it would soon lose its brightness. He however reflected on it for some time, as if there were still something involved contrary to holy poverty.

The slightest injury to this virtue wounded his susceptibility, and caused him uneasiness. Some of us began to use snuff-boxes of varnished pasteboard or of yellow leather. As soon as Alphonso saw it he immediately forbade us to do so again, and wished wooden ones always to be used as before. One day he saw a hat which shone more than the others; that was enough

to make him prohibit its further use and consider it as a scandal.

Some of the Fathers told him that common cloth was not durable enough for the mantellas and capotes, and that this material was prejudicial to poverty instead of favouring it, and that the houses of the Congregation would gain by buying cloth of a better quality. They believed that the incontestible justice of this argument would succeed in convincing Alphonso, but it went for nothing. "It is we," said he, "who have taken the vow of poverty, and not the houses; and it is we and not the houses who must submit to the consequences of this vow. Common cloth humbles and abases, and that is required by poverty."

Father Jerome Ferrara represented to him several times that brass lamps would cause less expense than earthen ones, which easily break and cause the oil to be wasted; all these reasons were unavailing. Alphonso remained firm, because his only motive for not yielding was that brass was like a luxury, while earthenware was more conformable to evangelical poverty.

When we had to go on horseback for missions in winter, and were surprised by snow or rain, we could not reach our destination without pain caused by the numbness of our limbs; Alphonso therefore was asked to allow boots to be worn on such occasions, but the proposition quite alarmed him. He was convinced of its necessity however at last, and allowed us to have gaiters of coarse cloth, but never of leather. It

was with great difficulty that he consented to the Fathers having a watch when going missions. When the Fathers represented to him the necessity of a watch in order to be able to regulate the time of the exercises, as clocks were rarely to be met with in the little villages, they alleged, in order to strengthen their petition, that Father Vincent Caraffa, although rigid in regard to poverty, had yet permitted his missionaries to use one. "Yes," replied Alphonso, "but that was in India, and we are not in India, but in Italy." However, when they convinced him that it was a necessary thing, he granted it, but on condition that the case should be of copper.

He was no less careful to cause prompt and unquestioning obedience to reign in the Congregation: to resist his determinations was immediately followed by a dismissal. He forbade Father don Peter Genovese, who was at Gragnano, to go from thence to Scala. But as this Father had promised some nuns of this town to go to see them, he went there by stealth. When Alphonso heard of it, he did not even give him time to return to the house, but he wrote to him to Scala itself, to inform him of his exclusion from the Congregation. He ordered Father Gerard Grassi, who was in the house at Ciorani, to change his abode and to go and live at Iliceto. The Father showed repugnance to setting out. The reasons which caused Alphonso to give him this order, and those for which Grassi wished not to obey it, were diametrically opposite. The

latter had a brother who was studying at Salerno, to whom he wished to be of use, and as he did so at the expense of the common edification, Alphonso thought it fit to send him away. When he saw that he resisted his orders, he wrote to Father Rossi, the Superior of the house, saying, "Since Father Grassi has refused to go to Iliceto, let him know immediately that I have dismissed him on account of his refusing to obey, and declare him expelled from the Congregation. Let us pray God, that if there are any subjects of a similar sort among us, they also may go out from us as soon as possible. If perfect obedience is given up, the Congregation will be destroyed." Father Grassi received his dismissal at Salerno. This same house of Iliceto was also the occasion of the fall of another priest, whom Alphonso wished to send there, and not without just reason; the unhappy man resisted, but he was told that if the air of Iliceto did not please him, it was a sign that he preferred that of his own house. He left the Congregation and came to a miserable end. When a subject was called away to any employment out of the house, Alphonso fixed on the duration of his absence, and he could not prolong it with impunity. Father Picardi, with some others who accompanied him, did not return on the appointed day; Alphonso appeared quite agitated at it, and ready to punish them for it; they escaped from chastisement however by showing that they could not avoid this delay. Alphonso seized on this occasion in order to set

forth the merit of obedience and the evil which is caused by rebellious subjects.

He exacted, as I have already said several times, the greatest respect and submission towards all Superiors. "It is not wonderful," he often said, "if I am obeyed, but I wish an equal submission to be shown to whoever presides over any exercise; for whatever may be his personal merits, he holds the office of Superior. If this is not attended to, mischief is done, and we shall see nothing but disorder and confusion." One of the most distinguished of the Fathers, but one tormented at times by a fretful temper, blamed in a fit of melancholy some regulations which his Superior had made about a mission. Alphonso heard of this, and although he felt compassion for him on account of his illness, he nevertheless wrote to him in the following terms: "I have been relieved to hear of your recovery, but I have been distressed to find that you have given vent to some observations in regard to your Superior which were not at all right. Many things may appear absurd, which it is, however, reasonable to approve, because their motive is not known. If each subject wishes to do what seems to him to be the best, obedience would no longer exist. I must therefore beg you will, when things do not appear to you to be done as they ought to be at any other time, to state your opinion with simplicity, and then do nothing beyond writing to tell me what you think is wrong."

He was still more alarmed at hearing that

the subjects of a Congregation had united together against the will of a Superior, for this was a fault which he never pardoned. "Public murmurs against obedience," he wrote to the Father Minister Jerome Ferrara at Iliceto, where he was at that time Superior, "are unpardonable faults, and deserve a severe punishment." The lay-brothers complained of having been deprived of the siesta after dinner during the winter; as their discontent had been public, Alphonso wished their penance to be so also. He deprived the two chief culprits of the habit for a considerable time, he condemned them to dine on their knees, to do without fruit or meat, and not to receive the holy communion oftener than every eight days at most. Intercessions were made in their favour, but Alphonso was inexorable.

Obedience was so dear to him, that he never consented to allow any one to ask advice in order to obtain a sanction for acting contrary to the determination of the Superiors. He wished that they should be respected as much as the rule. "I have been much pained," he wrote to Father Diodatus Crisenoli, "at hearing that your Reverence has made so much resistance to exercising the charge of the ministry; that which has distressed me most has been, hearing of your having consulted others on the subject, and that you have been told that you need not obey. It is only in case of sin that he who has taken a vow of obedience is not obliged to submit. It is in this event that I am pleased when advice is asked for by the members of the Congregation. I

do not wish to constrain you, but I pray you, for the love of our good Mother, to accept this office. Do me this favour, I beg you, to meditate for a little before the Blessed Sacrament, and Jesus Christ will change your feeling."

Alphonso wished that all the members of his Congregation should bow respectfully even before the very intentions of their Superiors. I had a proof of this myself: when I was still young I was nominated to the office of Master of Novices, and as I did not like this employment on account of my weakness, Alphonso, who was then at Ciorani, released me from it for some time, without, however, discharging me. When he returned to Nocera, he would have liked me to return to the direction of the noviciate voluntarily. The Father who had been substituted in my place was constantly urging me to resume it again, but I still showed disinclination for it, because he did not command me in Alphonso's name, and Father Ferrara himself, whose advice I took, did not approve of my reinstating myself of my own accord. Alphonso was not long in sending for me, in order to give me a severe reproof for not having returned to the noviciate, as I knew his wishes on the subject. I told him that Father Ferrara himself had advised me to act as I had done, upon which he was silent; but the matter did not end thus: he sent to Father Ferrara, and gave him a reprimand in a very animated manner, for having given me such advice, since the office of Master of Novices

had not been taken away from me, and his wishes on the subject were well known to him.

Alphonso was accustomed to say that obedience works miracles when it is exercised with promptitude and submission of mind; and that, on the other hand, the subject goes astray when he tries to set himself up to judge of the thing commanded, and to deviate from the will of his Superiors.

He ordered Father de Robertis to give the spiritual exercises to the people at Coverchia; this Father tried to excuse himself, because he had not any materials prepared, but Alphonso wished him to go notwithstanding, and that obedience should supply the rest. The exercises succeeded marvellously well, and gave great satisfaction to the inhabitants of Coverchia. The curé, Agnello Fiore, wrote to thank Alphonso for them, who, after having read his letter, said to Father de Robertis, "These exercises ought not to have succeeded, and I cannot understand why God has so blessed them after your repugnance and tardy obedience."

CHAPTER LX.

As one despairs of a vine when its sap is dried up, so Alphonso thought that the Congregation would be lost if the observance of the rule ceased to be kept up in full vigour; and as the vine dresser is always careful to repair the smallest injury, so Alphonso was unceasingly watchful,

and saw the slightest faults which were committed in the Congregation. He often said, that he would have preferred to see it dissolved, notwithstanding all the trouble its establishment had cost him, rather than to see any want of discipline in it. He constantly refused to found new houses, at the commencement of the institute, although he was solicited to do so, for no other reason than that he had not enough subjects to maintain regular observance of the rule everywhere. When he was importuned by requests on this subject, he replied, "Why should we wish to found monasteries? Where there is no family, there can be no observance of rule. What I am anxious for is, to see fervour increase in the Congregation, and not to increase the number of houses." He never consented to any foundation before he had enough subjects to form a community where the rule could be perfectly observed.

He knew the value of prayer, life in community, and fraternal love so well, that he required each member of the Congregation to be deeply anxious to cause these three props of the religious life to flourish. That which once occurred in our house at Nocera on this subject deserves to be related here. He observed that some in that monastery dispensed themselves from assisting in the choir at the public prayers in the morning, either on the plea of not having slept well on the preceding night, or on some other pretext. Alphonso, who attributed it to idleness, and not to any real necessity, ordered the brother infirmarian to take

them a cup of tea after prayers, and to reiterate the same thing at every following hour, ordering them not to get up before the doctor's arrival; in a word, they were obliged to remain fasting. This expedient had the desired effect, all the ills vanished, and the choir was filled before the time every morning afterwards. On the following Saturday Alphonso did not forget to give the following advice at the conference: "Fathers and Brothers, I repeat that our life ought to be one continual prayer; each of us ought to desire to become perfect in prayer; and in place of ever neglecting it, he should be ingenious in finding time for its exercise. It is thus that the Saints have done, and it is thus that our deceased brother acted." He alluded to Brother Blasucci.

He was one day speaking about the necessity of silence and of interior recollection, when he said, "This rule is the rule of rules; if we observe it faithfully, we shall soon become saints; but the misfortune is, that this rule seems to be banished from the Congregation. I see almost all of you leaving your rooms unnecessarily, and that many of you speak without modesty, even where it is forbidden to do so, such as in the corridors, the kitchen, and the refectory. The author of the Following of Christ says, that the pious soul profits much by silence and repose; it is through them that she penetrates into the secret things of the Scriptures; it is there that she finds the source of those tears which wash and purify her. My fathers and brothers, let us

not complain if we feel ourselves to be imperfect through dryness and want of recollection. Let us speak little to men, so as to be able to converse much with God, and He will act differently towards us, and will raise us up to a state of holiness." He also often said to us, "Without recollection of mind, there can be no spirit of prayer, and those who go to the choir in this disposition of mind go to torture: every instant seems an age to them, they come distracted, and they go away distracted; they lead a miserable life, neither possessing God, nor enjoying the world."*

He wished that the recreations which were appointed by the rule to take place after dinner and supper, should serve to refresh the mind and not to dissipate it. "There ought to be a difference," said he, "between the rest of a religious, and that of a man of the world: I grant that it is right to take a little recreation, but it is no less true that we ought, even during this time, to seek for God, and to recreate ourselves merely because God wishes it." The evening recreation especially ought to be spent in spiritual discourses, and it is an established custom in all the houses, to relate at that time what has been read during the day about the virtues of some saint. Alphonso carefully attended to the observance of this rule; he in-

* In silentio et quiete proficit anima devota, et discit abscondita Scripturarum. Ibi invenit fluenta lacrymarum, quibus singulis noctibus se lavet et mundet. (Imit. lib. i. cap. xx. 6.)

formed the Superiors of it, and did not cease to remind them when he heard that they neglected it.

He especially insisted on the Superiors and subjects making one day's retreat each month, and in October he reminded them all of going through the spiritual exercises for ten days according to custom. He also inquired into the accounts of conscience, and he advised us all to be very exact in this matter. He considered this exercise to be, as we have already seen, a great means of preserving harmony between Superiors and subjects.

He watched equally carefully over the prefects and lay-brothers, and was anxious to know if the latter were neglected as to their spiritual wants. He urged great justice in everything, and disliked the least partiality being shown to any one; but his heart was grieved when he heard any one complain of the food. "God knows," he said in a circular, "what we require to preserve life; He knows that we must have some bread: but we did not enter the Congregation for the sake of eating, and that which the rule allows us is amply sufficient." He considered it quite a sin in the Superiors to use any distinction in their own favour as to linen, or if when ill to have dishes or remedies not ordered by the infirmarian. "The preservation of life in community," said he, "depends on the love of the Superiors; it falls to ruin if they do not secure it by their own example."

His solicitude even extended to the welfare of

the strangers who came to make a retreat with us. He wished that great zeal should be felt for the spiritual exercises, and that all other interests should be put aside at that time; he heard that some of them had complained of us on the score of food; he therefore hastened to write thus to all the houses: "I exceedingly wish that all who make retreats in our houses should be well provided for; I hear that for some time several have complained of the way in which they were treated as to food; I do not wish that for a trifling saving the great good which results from these exercises should be compromised."

He considered it quite a scandal if any of us received any kind of present, such as provisions or sweet things, when not on missions; he ordered the Superiors not to permit it, and especially forbade it to the Father Ministers. "They must not," said he in one of his letters, "give the subjects any kind of sweet-meats coming from without, except fruit, which is to be distributed amongst all with the provisions of the community."

He took care that the subjects should always be supplied with necessary linen. He ordered that the name of the house should be marked on all the shirts, so that there might not be any confusion when the subjects of divers places met together during missions; he also wished that they should be lent with charity to any house which might stand in need of them. He did not allow any thing superfluous to be in the rooms. He wished, as he had learned from his model, St.

Theresa, that the Superiors should visit the rooms of the subjects every month, and that they should cause all that was either superfluous or useless at the time to be taken away.

He was singularly desirous to see brotherly love dwell amongst us all. See how he expresses himself on this subject on one occasion: "Let each one bear with his brother in charity. We have each our faults; he who has to put up with his brother's faults to-day will have to be borne with himself to-morrow. Let no person pretend to domineer over and to correct the others; I mean to speak of those who wish to affect a tone of superiority and of contempt. Correction is an act of charity, but if it be done without charity, it is injurious and of no avail whatever. Therefore, let no one meddle with the office of another, let no one ridicule the natural defects of any one whatsoever, and much less give utterance to bitter and offensive words." He detested those who spread reports, and looked on them all as sowing discord, and as so many incarnate demons; if they did not amend, after having been reprimanded, they were sooner or later expelled from the Congregation. He also got rid of melancholy spirits, who are a burthen to themselves, and make themselves still more insupportable to others.

Alphonso watched over the observance of every part of the rule. "The rule," he often said, "is so named because it ought to direct our actions. Every action which deviates from the rule, however good it may appear to be, must necessarily be bad and out of place. My Fathers, since we

have agreed to it voluntarily, and have promised Almighty God to obey it, is it not a kind of perjury to transgress it even in the smallest point? If we keep the rule, it will preserve us. It is a bulwark which defends the soul, and saves it from the snares of her enemies. When the devil wants to make us fall into some great sin against God's law, he first tempts us not to attach any weight to the rule; many are out of the Congregation, and perhaps loaded with sin, on account of their negligence in observing the rule."

Every kind of novelty shocked him. He had ordered that the caps worn in the houses should be of a round shape; some introduced pointed ones instead; as soon as Alphonso found it out he forbade them to be used, and reprimanded the brother tailor who had made them. He heard that our Fathers used a carriage when on a mission, when there was no real necessity for it, whereupon he gave the Superior a sharp rebuke for having permitted such an abuse. Some young Fathers belonging to the house at Ciorani, had caused the borders of the crucifixes which hung round the neck during missions to be ornamented with brass; when Alphonso saw it, he reproved them for it as for an act of vanity: he ordered these ornaments to be immediately done away with, and forbade anything of the kind to be used for the future.

In order to encourage the subjects to the faithful observance of the rule, and to the practice of virtue, he fixed that the Superior or some one

else should hold a conference on these matters every Saturday. After this exhortation each one had to accuse himself of whatever faults he had committed against the rule during the week. He also appointed that there should be a Father zealot in each house, who had to see that each one performed his duties properly, particularly during the time of being all together. On Mondays directly after dinner all stood up in the middle of the refectory, while this Father had to animadvert on all the faults which he had observed, when all whom he named immediately knelt down, and received with humility the penance inflicted on them by the Superior. "Let no one excuse himself," he said in a circular, "when he is named by the zealot; whoever makes excuses shall abstain from fruit once at dinner or at supper in penance."

Not satisfied with that, he also told some of the most fervent Fathers in the different monasteries to inform him secretly every month of all that they had noticed of an improper sort. He considered those who could have prevented some disorder by denouncing it to the Superior and yet did not do so, as so many traitors to the Congregation. "That is not charity, but iniquity," said he. "When we are corrected for a fault in time, one easily amends, at least if we do not wish to adhere to our evil passions for ever; but if we are not reproved for it, the habit is formed and we are lost." In order that it might not be possible to guess which of the brothers gave him such information, he wished

that they should all send him a letter every month, were it only a blank sheet. He also appointed secret zealots on the missions.

When a subject came from another house, if only a lay-brother, Alphonso immediately left every occupation in order to inquire from him as to whether there were any abuse in his community, and whether they lived in harmony with each other and with the Superior; if the Rector abused his superiority by any distinction in clothes or provisions; and if he were foremost in all good things, especially in attending morning prayer.

In order that there might be some one to watch over the conduct of local Superiors, he appointed a Father Admonitor in each house, whose office was to have an eye upon the Superior, and to see that he was anxious to maintain discipline amongst all the subjects, and that he himself was the first to edify them by his example; he wished that those who were in fault in any respect, should receive an energetic warning, and that they should be reminded of their duty; but if any considerable matter were concerned, which the Rector did not amend, the Admonitor was obliged to inform the Rector Major of it. By this wise solicitude, Alphonso prevented abuses, and left no fault without either a remedy or a punishment.

CHAPTER LXI.

Notwithstanding all the penetration with which Alphonso had drawn up his rule, and in spite of all the precautions he had taken in order to insure its strict execution, there were still from time to time in the Congregation subjects of vicious habits and who gave great disedification; for, as one finds weeds and tares in a large quantity of corn, so one meets with tepid or disobedient brothers in communities. Alphonso, whose consolation consisted in the good, and who unceasingly prayed God to strengthen their vocation, grieved over the wicked, and besought God either to enlighten them or to deliver the Congregation from them. He was quite relieved if one of these latter went away, and used often to say, "We see plainly that Jesus Christ protects us, as He has freed us from a thorn which tormented us, and has caused it to disappear without giving us the trouble of putting it out. I do not suppose that you can be impeccable," and he added, "but you may strive against your faults; to be at peace with them is the great evil: to fall, but then to rise again, to be humbled and to acknowledge the evil that has been done, justifies us and rejoices the heart of Jesus Christ. If the fault displeases Him, the humiliation pleases Him still more; he who takes shame to himself after sin merits new

graces, which will prevent him from falling into it again."

Alphonso was prompt in dismissing all who were guilty of serious, public, and inexcusable faults from the Congregation, because he dreaded the contagion of their bad example; but he had a wise degree of delay in sending away those who had sinned in a less glaring manner. He willed not the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and continue to dwell in the house of the Lord. As to the tepid and the incorrigible, Alphonso considered them as attacked by a chronic malady, which, for that very reason, was difficult of cure. "If a remedy taken in time," he said, "can easily overcome violent and acute ills, it is quite different with those which are of a less serious nature, but the attacks of which recur daily. The same thing takes place in regard to moral things; a correction made in time affects the culpable person, who, on seeing the serious nature of his fault, is able to regain his fervour; but no remedy is efficacious in recovering tepid souls, or can succeed in bringing them back to the exercise of Christian virtues.

To cite another example of his feeling in speaking of tepidity: he one day observed, "The angel said to the Bishop of whom mention is made in the Apocalypse, 'Utinam frigidus esses, aut calidus.' I say the same thing, first to myself, and then to each of my brethren. I would rather (although I pray that God may never either will or permit such a thing in this Con-

gregation), but I should be better pleased to see you cold and guilty of serious sin, than to know that you were in a state of indifference and leading a life full of imperfections and negligences. If you were cold, there would be more hope of your amendment; but if you were tepid and vicious, speaking voluntarily in silence time, not doing promptly what is commanded to you, showing pain at all that humbles you, avoiding obedience and endeavouring to cause your own opinion to prevail, there is cause to fear, and very great cause, that there would be much difficulty in correcting you, and that God, in displeasure at you, would take away His grace from you, and allow you to fall into some serious sin, and at last expel you from His house. The tepid person has only one new fall to make to cause God to reject him entirely. There are fervent spirits in the Congregation, but there are tepid ones also, and the latter out-number the former. My Fathers, let us drive away tepidity: the tepid soul is an object of disgust to God; he is a burthen to the community and to himself. Let us reform ourselves, and betake ourselves to our former fervour, if we wish to please God, to be a comfort to the Congregation, and to live a holy and happy life."

When Alphonso met with any who were afflicted by this malady, he did all he could to cure them. He called them to him, and warned them as a father of their danger. The incorrigible, for I must confess that there were such, often caused him loss of sleep. He made use of the spiritual

exercises, retreats for some days, and reiterated warnings, and did not give up his efforts until he saw that the case was a desperate one.

Alphonso made use of three methods for delivering the Congregation from these incurables. The first was to torment them by frequent punishments, by mortifications and penances. When they found themselves kept in so strictly, and incessantly pursued by the Father zealot, who hardly left them time to draw breath, these miserable and unenergetic subjects declared that they could not bear such a burden, and themselves asked for a dispensation from the oath of perseverance. "We must," said the saintly Superior, "imitate physicians, who, in incurable and desperate evils, have also recourse to extreme remedies; then, either nature passes through a crisis, and the sick person is cured, or the remedies are ineffectual, and the case is given up."

The second method was to keep them in the house, and to forbid them to practise any apostolic work whatever. "These rebels," said he, "have a stronger desire to labour than the most fervent subjects, not from a zealous wish to win souls to God, but to enjoy greater liberty."

The third method, and not the least efficacious one, consisted in causing them to change their abode, and in sending them to whatever monastery pleased them the least, because of being either the most incommodious or the least frequented. Besides the constraint which they experienced from this change, they were also

subjected to the pains and privations of the two first methods. If after that they were dangerous and likely to cause troubles in the Congregation, Alphonso tried the effect of leaving them in a sort of abandonment; he endeavoured to overcome their hardness by not appearing to take any further care of them; he gave them leave to return to their families on the most trifling pretexts, and without fixing the time of their return. Thus abandoned, they re-entered the world, and themselves renounced the Congregation, whither they had no further desire to return, or else Alphonso himself let them know at the end of some time, that they had nothing more to do with the Congregation. There was one amongst those towards whom this line of conduct had been exercised, who caused great torment to Alphonso and to several Superiors. Repeated corrections and charitable offices had no effect upon him; even with benefits before him, he made no return but ingratitude. He asked for permission to go to his relations, and obtained it; after some months had thus elapsed, Alphonso pronounced his exclusion from the Congregation, and at the same time predicted that he would come to a most miserable end. In fact, after having yielded to several excesses, the unfortunate man perished a victim to one of his enemies, who caused him to swallow poison at the altar on Holy Wednesday, in that very chalice from whence he ought to have obtained salvation; and on Good Friday, when all the bells were silent, he was buried as an infamous person, and

his corpse was exposed to examination in a cloister, in presence of the officers of justice, and a crowd of spectators.

Alphonso was in the habit of acting in this manner towards the incorrigible, that is to say, towards those who pretended to have the honour of wearing the garb of the Congregation, without wishing to bear any of its burthen; but if the offence were a serious one and calculated to give scandal to others; if, for example, it were a sin against obedience, Alphonso then only thought of giving justice its free course, and nothing could stop him.

CHAPTER LXII.

Among all the methods which Alphonso made use of in order to encourage his sons to put off the old man, the most efficacious was that of inspiring them with a high idea of their vocation. He said, and with reason, that vocation and predestination were one and the same thing, and he thought that the having been chosen by God to form part of a rising Congregation, was a grace which, of itself, required in us a great degree of perfection and holiness. "In calling us to this state," said he, "God has not conferred a merely ordinary degree of grace on us, but a grace which is as great as it is uncommon. We must therefore pray that Almighty God will cause us to understand the value of this

grace, for if we do not correspond to so holy a vocation, we shall run the risk of eternal ruin. God has chosen us to be coadjutors of His Blessed Son, and to rescue souls from the grasp of the devil. A call to the apostolic ministry is an evident sign of predestination. If we procure the salvation of one soul, we shall also save our own. What a consolation will it be for a member of the Congregation to see thousands of souls around his bed at the hour of death, uttering with joyful accents, "Opera tua sumus!" O let us never cease to thank God, and let us pray Him to aid us in valuing this great gift aright, this gift which has not been granted to so many others, who are our countrymen and our friends. What claims had we more than they? perhaps only our greater iniquities; and yet God, notwithstanding our unworthiness, has delivered us out of this miserable world."

One day when he was deploring the progress made by licentiousness, he said, "We ought to be most thankful to God for having taken us out of the world and led us to enter into His house, where the truths of faith are always put before the mind by frequent meditations, pious lectures, spiritual discourses, and good examples. All these things are a great help to us in difficult positions, whereas those who are in the world, from only thinking and speaking of the things of the world, have few ideas in their imagination but depraved ones, which cause them to give way on the least temptation."

He one day said with reference to the great fear in which every one ought to live in regard to his salvation, "Our fear however ought not to be like that which those in the world feel. We ought to fear as they fear who, having entered a vessel, are exposed to a tempest in the harbour, where it is difficult to perish; but worldlings are in as much danger as those who are in a little tempest-tossed bark in the midst of the wide ocean, where shipwreck is almost inevitable."

When any one of us was on the point of death the pious Superior felt a mixture of sadness and of joy; he wept for the loss of a labourer, but he rejoiced much more at having seen a Saint die, and at having gained a new advocate in heaven; he therefore wished that the day should be one of public recreation at table instead of one of mourning.

He never called to mind the gift of vocation without enforcing love and gratitude towards Jesus Christ, and zeal to arrive at perfection. He said to us, "If the grace which God has conferred on us in calling us to the Congregation has been great, our fidelity in corresponding to it should be great also. God perhaps wills that a brother should be sanctified like a St. Paschal, a student like a St. Louis, a missionary like a St. Francis Regis; now he who does not wish to correspond to this call of the Lord runs the risk of damnation, because by rendering himself unworthy of a continuation of grace he deprives himself of the assistance necessary to attain even

to that amount of sanctity which he proposes to himself. There are then some whom God destines to be great saints, and if they do not strive to attain to this high end I do not know that they will be saved."

On other occasions he said, "You have taken the great step in corresponding with your vocation; if you go but a little further you will become saints; but your entrance into the Congregation was the work of grace rather than of yourselves, therefore the little which is remaining for you to do ought to proceed entirely from your own heart, as if you had all to do and grace nothing." He was not satisfied with ordinary holiness in those belonging to him; he wished them to aim higher. "We know not the secrets of God," said he, "nor on what conditions He may have caused our predestination to depend. He who is called to great holiness does not satisfy the heart of Jesus Christ by a low degree: if we do not aim very high, we shall not easily succeed in reaching the end which God has appointed for us."

Alphonso was particularly distressed at the misplaced tenderness of some who after having shown great fervour up to that time, thought themselves obliged to leave the Congregation if they heard that any reverse of fortune had befallen their parents, in order to go to assist them. Pitying their distress, and wishing to preserve their vocation, he did not hesitate to relieve their families in spite of the great want under which he himself laboured; he did so on

many occasions by giving them up the fees of their masses. Some of the brothers thought that such instances of charity were excessive, on account of the poverty of the Congregation; but Alphonso replied, that charity can never fall into excess, and that God repays all that is given in His name. I remember vividly one of our Fathers, who was a constant burthen to the community on account of his many infirmities; but as he gave edification by his observance of the rule Alphonso took every possible pains to preserve the vocation of such a worthy brother.

The high idea which he had conceived of the religious calling, caused his affliction to be extreme when he saw one of those belonging to him overcome by temptation and ready to fall back. He examined these combats under two different points of view, in order to find out whether they were caused by temptation or by malice of self-will. He pitied the subject in the first case, and tried to aid him by his prayers and by those of others; he even forgave him for some impertinence. The following is an instance of this: One of our Fathers who was still young, fancied that he had been sent to the house at Iliceto as a punishment; he informed Alphonso, in an extravagant letter, that if he did not remove him from that house he should leave the Congregation. Alphonso was convinced that this was nothing but a pure suggestion of the devil's; he therefore wrote to him most graciously: "St. Paul the first hermit said to St. Anthony the abbot, who begged him to open the door, or else he

should die on the spot, 'This is a new way of begging: you beg with a menace.' I say the same thing to you: I feel pity in seeing the strife which has arisen in your heart: who ever sent you to Iliceto as a punishment? And then, just observe what you say, 'Otherwise I shall ask for a dispensation.' This is very well, but who will give it to you? Another time I trust you will not be so angry. I repeat that I forgive you, for it is not you who speak, it is temptation. But let us have patience, and wait till this noxious influence has passed away." Through these words, which were just suited to the state of the young man's mind, Alphonso drove away his temptation and restored him to peace.

He also employed another admirable artifice on such occasions. When any one came to him for a dispensation from the oath of perseverance, Alphonso, who saw the temptation, appeared at first to be quite ready to grant what he asked for. And as resistance often makes us obstinate, this very promptitude stopped the subject; but Alphonso then went on to speak to him with mildness; he made him weigh the evil consequences of the step he had taken, and showed him that it was nothing but a temptation; in this way the subject became ashamed and saw his error, and, as his blindness became enlightened, he then only requested to be allowed to stay.

Although Alphonso assisted these wavering subjects with so much charity, he no longer relied upon them as before. He said that they were stones which had become loose. "A stone,"

said Alphonso, "which has been shaken in the body of a building can never be readjusted as before, whatever may be the skill of the workman." He was in the habit of saying, and he held it as morally certain, "That one can never shed tears enough to purchase new graces after having lost the first;" and experience has shown that several after this infidelity to their vocation have ended by losing it altogether. The slightest shadow had the effect of a real substance on them, and while they remained in the Congregation they were rather burdensome than useful to him.

It has happened that some, in the first impulse of passion, have left their monastery in search of him; and that when on the way they have been so blinded and overcome by temptation, that instead of coming to him they have returned home. In order to prevent such fatal suggestions of the devil, Alphonso forbade by a formal decree any subject from coming to see him, without having first informed his local Superior of it, and obtained his permission. He also decreed, for the same reason, that the dispensation from the oath of perseverance should not be received out of the monastery without coming to him in person to ask for it. He preserved several persons from shipwreck by these means. There were some who, being overcome by the devil, despised this express command, and returned to the world without permission, and without having come themselves to obtain the dispensation. Alphonso had no compassion for

such men; he showed no mercy to any of them, and never consented to release them from the engagement they had contracted towards God and the Congregation, until after they had come in confusion to cast themselves at his feet.

When he was convinced that any of them wished to return to the world, not through temptation, but through a fixed determination of will, and that they had lost the grace of God, and therefore no longer cared for their souls nor for him, Alphonso then did not hesitate an instant in freeing them from the oath of perseverance, although he did so with great regret, and often accompanied by the most fatal predictions; he considered such a dispensation as a very passport to the devil's house, and only gave it in tears.

There was one Father whom he had constantly refused to dispense from the vow of perseverance. This unfortunate man was carried away by an exaggerated attachment to his mother, and positively wished to leave the Congregation: as nothing succeeded in turning him aside from his purpose, Alphonso at last said to him on seeing his obstinacy, "I give you leave, but you will come to a bad end." The prediction was not a false one; the unhappy man went away, and returned home, where he became the victim of God's anger and that of men also; he had no more peace, he was despised by all priests, and a prey to a thousand contradictions; and he had more suffering than even this, for his own mother caused him the greatest distress of all, and although he was seriously ill, she turned him

out of her house, and he ended his life, deprived of every sort of assistance, abandoned as a reprobate, and left in a miserable out-of-the-way hovel. He left the Congregation for his mother, and at his last hour God permitted him to be deserted by her.

Alphonso took no further pains about those who left the Congregation in this way or caused themselves to be expelled from it, and there is no instance of any one of them ever having re-entered the Congregation. Any further intercourse with these deserters was forbidden, and they were considered as so many heathens and publicans. They were no sooner dispensed from the oath of perseverance, than they were ordered to quit the monastery as soon as possible; and if they afterwards requested to return to it, no intercession in their favour caused their wishes to be granted: the prayers of the most influential people, such as those of our oldest Fathers, could not prevail on the holy Superior. Although it was not absolutely decreed, experience proved that those who once went away could never hope to return again. How many entreaties did not one of these latter use, and how many methods did he not employ in order to obtain pardon! He even got Bishop Borgia and Bishop Basta to interpose in his favour, but nothing could move Alphonso.

One Father, who had been sent away for some cause I am ignorant of, began to reflect seriously, and perceiving what a deplorable state he was in, he presented himself before Alphonso;

he threw himself at his feet, and while thus prostrated before him all bathed in tears, he entreated him to receive him again; but Alphonso was immovable. This Father, knowing that he never refused anything which he was asked in the name of the Blessed Virgin, conjured him to pardon him for the love of Mary; but Alphonso replied vehemently, "The Blessed Mary does not wish me to go to hell for you."

What efforts Father Genovese made to re-enter the Congregation! He went so far as to complain of his sentence in an urgent letter which he wrote to Alphonso, wherein he accused him of severity. "Father Genovese has written to me," Alphonso wrote to us, "that Father Manulius on his death-bed must have regretted having sent away some of the subjects of the company; but I say, that if I were to die now, I should feel no other regret than for having been too indulgent, and for not having been sufficiently rigorous in expelling disedifying subjects from the Congregation. If I had done so, the evil I deplore would never have happened, (he alluded to the Abbé and to the four young clerics whom he had led astray.) We ought to have charity towards all, but no consideration, no, I repeat it again, no undue consideration; I hope by God's assistance never to have it again towards any one. In future I shall act with more energy in regard to the imperfect, and without any human respect." One of this sort of persons once asked him for a certificate; Alphonso replied, "I have no certificates for those who are traitors to the Congregation."

CHAPTER LXIII.

The heart of the most tender father could not feel greater love for his children than Alphonso did towards our students. He wished the Superiors to have the greatest affection, and the most paternal affection for them all. "They are," said he, "the hope of the Congregation, because they will one day have to replace us." When any of them were ill, he spared nothing in order to facilitate their recovery; he sent for the best physicians in the neighbourhood, and if the sick persons were humble and resigned, they obtained a fresh hold on his love. "We are their father," said Alphonso, "and the Congregation is their mother. Since they have left their parents in order to give themselves to God, it is right that they should be treated with the greatest charity."

He was glad at seeing them get on in their studies, but he did not like them to have an immoderate wish to know more than is fitting. "For," said he, "as discretion is a virtue, so too much ardour is a vice." There were three things which he wished never to be forgotten in the course of their studies: first, he did not like them to seek to know anything but what was useful and necessary, and always with suitable moderation; in the second place he objected to any boasting before others of more knowledge than was really possessed, much more to setting up for having acquirements which one had

not; and his third rule was, that he wished for a continual growth in virtue, and especially in humility. He mentioned that Cardinal Tarrucci wrote to his nephew, who was a Franciscan, telling him to apply principally to the knowledge of the saints, because there had been a greater number of ignorant saints in that order than of learned men.

He was distressed to see a student employed in going through more books than his professor had assigned him, and he wished each one to study his task thoroughly, so as to become perfectly well acquainted with it. He said, "You ought to look upon yourselves as so many little children; it is for the master to judge what is fit for you, and to supply you with the occupations which may be best fitted to cultivate your minds. Many remain ignorant from wishing to know too much."

He thought it still worse if any of them looked through the sacred orators during the course of study, and made a selection of morsels for the pulpit. "This is a pure temptation," said he, "because by that they neglect what is essential for a mere accessary. To collect these materials with any good result, they ought to have finished their studies, for otherwise they derive no profit from it, and do not study as they ought." One student who had this mania amongst others, had been reproved for it and punished several times, but he did not amend in the least. Alphonso on finding that he was incorrigible, felt obliged to send him home; he did it with the prediction

that his disobedience would be followed by sad consequences. And, in fact, this unfortunate being, after having led a wandering and despicable life, began to keep a public-house in despair, and died unknown in a miserable tavern.

He liked to see a holy emulation among the students, provided it were never disunited from charity. A party of young men in the house at Caposeli entered into a rivalry with the students at Ciorani, and sent them a critical and learned letter couched in rather pungent terms. Alphonso was quite displeased at it, and immediately wrote to Father Cajone, the Superior at Caposeli: "You must mention it at the next chapter that I do not like such sallies, and that they are equally opposed to a spirit of charity. You all belong to but one thing, that is to say, you are brothers, and sons of the same mother."

He felt extreme consolation when he observed a humble tone of subordination and a low opinion of themselves amongst the students, added to a love of Christian mortification. Several young men were on the eve of setting out from the house at Nocera; he enjoined nothing on them but humility, obedience, and mortification. "Humility, my brothers," he repeated several times, "humility; by this means you will become holy and learned."

As the preacher of the best sermon during a mission was generally more praised than the others, he tried to disabuse the young men's minds of erroneous notions about it, and to prevent any degree of ambition. "My children, be

on your guard against vanity or the ambition of preaching. It is more necessary to instruct the people than to make fine sermons: the truths of the Gospel are better impressed by catechisings than by sermons." He wished the young men to have no other ambition than that of devoting themselves to the salvation of the poor and the country people. One Sunday when he sent them to give an instruction on Christian Doctrine in the parishes, he again said, and he never failed to repeat it to them, "My children, strive to aid the most necessitous souls; now when you are sent to teach the catechism, go and do it with a great desire of instructing the poor little children, and do not fancy that it is but a trifling matter. Jesus Christ Himself was sent by His Father to teach the ignorant."

He wished for holiness of life and love towards Jesus Christ in the young clerics, still more than for knowledge. "True knowledge," he said to them, "consists in knowing Jesus Christ well. What good will knowledge be to us, if its end is not to seek after God? It may be truly said that our brother Blasucci had true knowledge, because in all he did he only sought for God; and, as you all know, he died a Saint. We must study, it is true, as we are labourers; but we ought to be fully persuaded that the one thing needful, and that which Jesus Christ requires above everything else, is that we should endeavour to be saved as Saints. We must study, but the sole object of study ought to be that of pleasing God, otherwise it will only cause us

to be a long time in purgatory, nay even may lead some perhaps into the torments of hell, which may God forbid. Let your aim then always be the glory of God and the good of souls, and when an opportunity occurs of seeming ignorant, do not recoil from it, for it will not hurt you."

At other times he said to them, "If we would find God in everything, we must be detached from all, even from spiritual consolations. Now, does he who cherishes the wish to gratify his ambition of preaching seek for God alone? Undoubtedly not; it is the same in regard to the man who is attached to sensible graces. Consolations it is true come from God, but to seek for consolations is to be attached to them; that is not to seek God alone, but to seek oneself."

Listen to the warnings which he left in the house at Ciorani in the year 1761, on the last visit he paid there: "Be respectful to the prefect and professor, and have the greatest possible veneration and submission for all. When you are reproved, do not try to defend nor to excuse yourselves, but receive advice with humility. Never fail to render the account of conscience every fortnight, and have especial confidence in the prefect. Do not walk about in the cloisters without a necessity for it, except in repose and public recreation hours; but let each one remain quietly in his room. I also forbid you to go into the choir or to any place not appropriated to study without permission from the prefect. In

repose time, each one is to keep to his own room, and to take care not to inconvenience the others; and in the common study-room rigorous silence must be observed. Let there be no misplaced altercations on scientific things, but yield mutually to one another, in a spirit of humility. Wherever you have to go together, let it always be by two and two, and with a modest deportment. The key of a common room must only be entrusted to the first cleric."

The following advice he left in writing for the Prefect and Superior: "The Superior as well as the Prefect must not allow the students to speak to laics without necessity, and the Superior must not permit it without having first spoken to the Prefect; if the interview is permitted, it must always take place in the presence of the head cleric or of some other one; the Fathers and Brothers of any of the community must not be admitted to the students' recreation, and still less any strangers; and when the Prefect is absent, let him be replaced by another Father. In fine, when any one is indisposed, he must not be entirely dispensed from study, or if he cannot study, he must at least be present at the lesson." Such were the last instructions which Alphonso left in regard to the ecclesiastical students before his episcopate.

He had also an extreme affection for the young novices. He envied their happiness in being in God's house from the beginning of their lives, without having any knowledge of the world, while he had not been called until the end of

his days, or at least until late in life. When the noviciate was in the house where he himself lived, he always passed the evening recreation with the novices. He would have liked to have the noviciate constantly under his own superintendance, but he was very often obliged to place it in another house, much to his regret.

Nothing caused him so much sorrow as to hear that a novice laboured under some temptation, and still more did he grieve if he had had proofs of this novice's vocation. He sent for him, tried to enlighten him and to strengthen him as far as he could, and when the young man was convinced by him Alphonso's face showed the gladness of his heart. In order to inspire faithfulness in following a vocation, and fear of losing it, he was in the habit of saying, that "vocation and perseverance are two distinct graces; God can give us the former even in the midst of our infidelities, but we shall not have the grace of perseverance if we do not deserve it through prayer and good works. It is this crown which the devil wishes to take from us, and God allows him to tempt us to try our constancy and to reward us proportionably."

He required three things in the novices to insure their persevering and triumphing over temptations; viz. humility, obedience, and openness of heart. "He who is humble and knows his own misery," said he, "is all-powerful against the devil; he can never go astray if he blindly trusts to the guidance of his Superiors, and above

all, if he is candid in confiding all that he feels to his director. A temptation which is revealed to another is vanquished or half vanquished; for the devil, who is pride itself, does not suffer his artifices to be disclosed to a creature of earth, such as man is." When he found these dispositions in a novice, he felt sure that there was nothing to fear.

He wished the Father Master to be all heart and full of love towards the young men. He was constantly recommending this to me during upwards of four-and-twenty years when I had the direction of the noviciate. He did not like the use of severity or penances, but preferred that of mild and charitable exhortations, and that good and evil should be placed before the eyes of the novices. "The Congregation is free," he said, "and God only wishes for voluntary sacrifices. The novice who does not amend after having been reprimanded shows that he has not come with right intentions, and the Congregation had better get rid of him." He wrote to me at Iliceto in the following terms: "At the commencement some defects in a novice may be put up with, but if he does not correct them after having been reproved for them, especially if these faults are dangerous to others, he must be dismissed at once, for a vicious person causes more harm by his bad example than a heretic. Therefore, when you know that any one has this fault, do not let him frequent the society of the others; his conversation may do more injury than a hundred demons."

Alphonso was quite affected at seeing a good novice ill, and if sometimes the Fathers wished to send him home he became his advocate. "There is no law to exclude those who have left everything in order to consecrate themselves to God from His house. If the doctors and remedies which we have here cannot restore their health, they will not recover it any better in the house of their parents. If God wills that they shall die, it is better for them to die in the Congregation than in the midst of the world." At other times he said, "What mother ever expelled her son from home because he was ill?" His maxim was, that those who were patient and pious in illness assisted the Congregation by their example, and that as they were themselves pleasing to God, they drew down innumerable graces upon it also. When a fervent novice was at the point of death Alphonso was not distressed, for he rejoiced in the assurance that such a novice was happy. If on the contrary a sick person wished to leave us, he only granted it with pain. Among other regulations he had fixed that priests might be dispensed from half their noviciate by the Rector Major; but in point of fact, he never granted this privilege while he lived; on the contrary, he never failed to prolong the time of probation for these latter whenever he could, as experience had taught him that they had more need of it than the others, from being less pliable and less accustomed to obey. Although he was easy in receiving certain priests, as far as the beginning of the Institute went, he was

as circumspect and particular afterwards. He did not admit them until he had perceived a good will in them, and the signs of a true vocation.

As the Father of the whole family, Alphonso did not show less solicitude for the lay-brothers; he neglected no means of furthering their spiritual advantage. He considered them as seamen labouring at the oars, while the pilot is working with the others in the interior of the vessel. "If these poor brothers," he was accustomed to say, "employ themselves in aiding us in temporals, it is but just for us to assist them in spiritual things." He ordered that they should be fed, treated, and provided with all that they required, in the same manner as the rest; that they should go through the morning and evening prayer and examen with the community; that they also should pay their special visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, and that they should say the third portion of the Rosary. He wished them to go to confession twice a week, and to receive the Holy Communion every Wednesday and Friday, as well as on every day of obligation. He also appointed that they should have a day's retreat every month; and, instead of the ten days' spiritual exercises each year, he enjoined three days' retreat for them in each of the Ember Weeks.

When a brother was received he had still to remain in secular clothes during six months of the noviciate, while he had to practise the virtues befitting his state, under the guidance of

the Master of Novices. He then obtained a habit of dark cloth if he had conducted himself in an edifying manner. Father Cajone, the Superior at Caposeli, once asked for this favour for a young brother who was in the noviciate; Alphonso replied to him, "Yes, you can give him a black habit of dyed cloth, but without the white collar." After six or seven months' probation, they were sent to the noviciate in this dress for six months longer; at the end of this time, if they had conducted themselves well, they received the habit of the Congregation, which was four inches shorter than that of the choir brothers, and then they were allowed to pronounce the vows and the oath of perseverance.

Alphonso also required perfect submission in his brothers; he bore with the vicious as long as he could, but when he saw no hope of amending them, he dismissed them from the Congregation. A lay-brother of Caposeli was not over correct as to conduct, although he understood clock and watch-making very well. "You must not keep this brother any longer at Caposeli." Alphonso wrote to Father Cajone, "I wish to have him here under my own eyes, and if I find that he continues to conduct himself as he has done until now, he shall go and practise his trade in the world. We do not want clock-makers, but brothers who will set a good example."

Alphonso required a spirit of submission and humility in all belonging to him, but he especially exacted it from the lay-brothers. He punished

even the least appearance of a want of humility by severe and exemplary chastisements. He heard that one brother seemed to wish to be equal to the Fathers, and that he adopted a familiar tone with them; he immediately wrote to Father Francis Maegotta, the Superior of his house, saying, "Humble Brother N., and make him see his pride; tell him that if he does not amend, and abase himself before the Fathers, he shall be expelled, like another Lucifer, from the house of God." Some of the brothers at the house at Ciorani rebelled and entered into a confederacy together. Their conspiracy displeased Alphonso even more than their claims. I was Superior at Iliceto at that time, and he wrote to me from Nocera saying, "We have done justice to Ciorani here; we have sent Brother Crescenzi away, who had excited the rebellion by his words, and who afterwards refused to perform the prescribed penance."

Another time, some of them took it into their heads to mingle indiscriminately amongst the Fathers, because we lived in common, wishing not to have a separate place at table. This want of humility was a cause of deep sorrow to Alphonso; he wrote to them all saying, "My Brothers, God knows what pain I have felt in hearing of your having committed so many faults, and, what is worse, faults of pride, while your one aim ought to be humility, which is the proper virtue for lay-brothers. For this time I forgive you, but do not compel me to inflict a punishment on you at a future period, which may bring eternal

punishment with it; for if I am obliged to send you away from the Congregation, I do not know what may result from it, but I should much fear for your salvation." As several amongst them had let it be known in an underhand way that they would leave the Congregation if they did not obtain what they wanted, Alphonso went on thus: "Let me hear no more about this proposal of wishing to go away; these very words would be enough to oblige me to dismiss you. Your place will always be the lowest after the Fathers, the students, and novices. What a shame! lay-brothers aspiring to pre-eminence! Do not give me any further trouble; I love you, my brothers, but I wish to make you become saints, and the virtues which are most needful for you are humility, obedience, and patience. Without suffering there is no sanctity. I give my blessing to all the brothers whose intentions are upright, but not to those who have evil ones; for through their pride they do not deserve the benediction, but the malediction of Jesus Christ." Such were Alphonso's vigilance, firmness, and mildness, in causing the love of the rule and the spirit of Jesus Christ to dwell throughout all his Congregation.*

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* The following is the wise regulation which directed Alphonso's conduct, and caused him to be an eminent Superior. It is taken from his writings, and from the judicial attestations which were registered during the process of his canonization.

1. A Superior ought to lead an exemplary life, for if he does not practise what he teaches, his government will be useless and dangerous.

2. The Superior ought constantly to labour for God, and to be persuaded that he will often meet with ingratitude from man.

3. Too severe a Superior makes the subjects imperfect and deceitful, because they will only act through servile fear.

4. Pride makes a Superior odious to all; it hinders his own sanctification and that of his subjects, as well as the preservation of order in the institute.

5. The Superior ought to possess heroic patience, he ought to bear all kinds of labour, fatigue, and contradiction, and always appear calm and affable towards all.

6. The Superior ought to give every one a reception full of charity and affection, and be all to all on all occasions.

7. The Superior ought to be impartial to cherish the same degree of love towards all, and to assist all alike in all their spiritual and temporal wants.

8. The Superior who does not overcome his antipathies, sympathies, or impressions caused by ill-temper, is hasty in his judgments, and falls into a thousand faults.

9. The Superior ought not to be so presumptuous as to try to govern an institute by means of his own lights only, he is always in need of prayers and counsels.

10. The Superior ought to provide for the spiritual and temporal wants of his subjects, and to relieve them with all the interest of a father and of a brother.

11. The Superior ought to be vigilant as to the observance of the rule, he must therefore inquire into everything with the greatest exactitude.

12. The Superior must not judge things hastily, but weigh them well, and reflect and inquire into them, before giving any decision.

13. The Superior ought to punish offences against the rule, but he ought first to give repeated warnings, and which should always be accompanied by charity.

14. The Superior ought to be firm against the incorrigible, and he must take care to prevent the contagion of bad example.

15. The Superior ought to be just, exemplary, prudent, charitable, affable, and vigilant, if he would not undergo a terrible judgment at the tribunal of God.

(Rispoli, Vita del beato Alphonso Maria de Liguori, page 146.)

CHAPTER LXIV.

We have reached the period when Alphonso saw his Congregation in the most prosperous state. After having endured the most severe fatigues, and watered the vine which the Lord had given him to cultivate with the sweat of his toils, he had the consolation of seeing it become fruitful and flourishing. It numbered a great many houses, which were all firmly established, richly provided with labourers, and capable of forming so many bulwarks against the incursions of hell. There were at least from eighteen to twenty subjects in each community, who were all distinguished by their talents and by their virtues, and well versed in philosophy, history, and theology.

We had numerous students who made wonderful progress in science therein, under the instructions of distinguished masters. These young plants filled Alphonso with hope; he looked on them as so many precious treasures for the Congregation. He attached great importance to their perfecting themselves in the knowledge of Latin, and he even wished that those who were possessed of good abilities should devote two whole years to the study of literature, which he considered as the necessary basis of all study. He had established a course of study in one of our houses, where philosophy and the elements of sacred and profane history were taught; in another the time was devoted to dogmatics. He forbade any part of these courses to be dictated,

because he said that in writing the chest is injured and time is lost.

He wished that the authors who are the most esteemed by the learned should be made use of, without any attachment to any particular system, and he forbade any of the useless or obsolete questions, which were formerly adopted by the schoolmen, to be agitated. Moral theology was generally taught in the house where he lived, and he was extremely careful, as we have already seen, to prevent opinions from being adopted which, although called probable, are notwithstanding not in conformity with the canons and the Gospel. In order to encourage the young philosophers and theologians to work with ardour, he allowed them to maintain theses to which many of the learned amongst the secular and regular were invited, besides the private theses in which our Fathers were most engaged. There were academies of literature in our houses at the solemn fetes; poetry, and Hebrew, and Greek, were no strangers then. Alphonso himself once delivered a discourse in honour of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin to encourage the youngest men. All this kept up a sort of emulation among the students and seconded their efforts admirably.

But Alphonso's chief pleasure was in seeing the great good which the missionaries effected in almost every province of the kingdom. Each house successfully laboured for God's glory and the salvation of souls, not only in the place where it was established, but also in all the

neighbourhood. Our Fathers of Nocera and Ciorani spread through the hither principality, and in the dioceses of the Campania, and grace caused them to work prodigies and surprising conversions everywhere. They even went on mission as far as the diocese of Naples, which a Neapolitan missionary called temerity. Seeing the gratification of the people and the great good which was effected, Cardinals Spinelli and Sersale, as well as their successor, Archbishop Filangieri, wished us to co-operate with them in the labours of their diocese, as the most eminent Zurlo wishes at the present time.

The house at Iliceto ministered to the spiritual wants of all the villages and numerous farm houses in the King's domains, but it also gave aid with great success to the Capitanate, the provinces of Bari and of Lecci, as well as to a part of the Basilicate and of the citerior principality. The house of St. Angelus laboured in the furthermost principality, on the confines of the estate of Labour, in citerior Abbruzze and in a part of the Capitanate. The house at Caposeli embraced all the principalities, and penetrated into the Basilicate. The two other houses of Scifelli and of Frosinone were equally devoted to the salvation of the people, not only in the Pontifical States, but also in ulterior Abbruzze and in a part of the territory of Labour. Besides this, all the houses together sent labourers into the two Calabrias, where they had a number of missions, to the great advantage of these two dioceses.

Independently of the missions, the spiritual

exercises which were given by a smaller number of subjects were equally productive of the greatest good. The demands were so numerous that it was difficult to supply them. The exercises were so successful that they were considered as so many missions. The Bishops vied with one another in asking for them for their clergy and their seminaries. A multitude of confraternities also wished to share in so great a benefit, and contented themselves could they get but one of our Fathers. The cloistered monasteries, and even communities of regulars, were no less eager in wishing for them. The Father General, Letizia, wished to have Father Sportelli to give a retreat at the convent of Monte Vergine; the success was such that he did not fail to ask for a repetition of it. The Celestine Fathers at San Severo also begged to have us. Father Master Troisi, of the order of St. Augustine, insisted on our Fathers going to give these holy exercises to his religious at Solofra: many other communities made similar requests to us. Naples also emulated this ardour for having our missionaries, and the spiritual exercises which they gave in the churches there were most remarkable. His Majesty King Charles III. and afterwards his son, Ferdinand IV., having been informed of the great good Alphonso effected by his community, often wished a great number of our subjects to come and give the spiritual exercises at the military school. Amongst others, Father Alexander de Meo's labours produced such fruit there during some years, that several

of the cadets abandoned the most advantageous prospects in order to become religious, and most of them joined our Congregation. Many generals were equally anxious that their soldiers should receive their share in Alphonso's zeal, and he always had the consolation of satisfying them.

Our missionaries had also another occupation which equally contributed to the glory of the Congregation; I speak of the novenas which they gave everywhere, to prepare the faithful for the great feasts of the year. These novenas were generally desired, because our Fathers then spoke of Christian virtues in a way which was the best calculated to cause them to be loved. Celebrated towns, such as Foggia, Salerno, and Nola, were frequently the scene of their zeal.

Alphonso experienced no less satisfaction in the result of the retreats which were given at the house to the young candidates for holy orders; at Ciorani alone, from a hundred and thirty to a hundred and fifty clerics assembled together from forty different dioceses in the kingdom. But at the end of these exercises many of the young men gave up the idea of entering into holy orders, from the alarm which a consideration of the obligations of the priesthood produced. It happened one day that three amongst them, after a sermon from our Father, Alexander de Meo, laid aside the ecclesiastical dress, from feeling that they were not called to such a holy state.

The Bishops themselves, on seeing the benefit which was derived from them, came and assisted

at them, and were present while they lasted. Don Innocent San Severino, the Bishop of Montemarano, was in the habit of coming to Ciorani with a great number of his priests. Mgr. Volpi, the Bishop of Nocera, and Mgr. Borgia, Bishop of Caleava, did the same. Amongst the number of distinguished personages who came to Iliceto from divers places, we will only name Mgr. Campanile, Bishop of Ascole, Mgr. Onorati, Bishop of Trevico, Mgr. Basta, Bishop of Melfi, Mgr. Amato, Bishop of Lacedogna, and Mgr. Brancaccio, who was Bishop of Ostuni, and at that time Grand Vicar of Ariano. All these prelates were accompanied by half their clergy, and they sent us the other half on returning to their dioceses. Mgr. Basta was once so affected by grace during these exercises, that he wished to resign his episcopate and become a reformed Carmelite, and he would have done so if our Father Cafaro, who was his director, had not prevented it.

Many regulars belonging to the most respected orders came to our houses, from the wish to become more closely united to Almighty God. The Conventuals, the Religious of Monte Vergine, of St. Augustine, and others, used to come to Ciorani. When Father Don Charles Carafa, the Theatin, resided at Foggia, he used to go to the house at Iliceto several times a year, with a numerous suite of persons who required a retreat.

A graduated Benedictine was penetrated with such deep compunction, that he felt no difficulty in confessing his sins before upwards of a hundred persons. Another Father, who was a religious of

the order of St. Augustine, and also a graduate, felt inclined to ridicule this act of humility, but after he had gone through the spiritual exercises he was himself so touched by divine grace that he did the same thing. Such examples were not uncommon in our houses.

The concourse of laymen was still more numerous; gentlemen of the first distinction, princes, and military of the highest rank, hastened to go into retreat, and merit the mercies of the Lord. It caused astonishment to see so many priests and laymen come even from Naples to Ciorani to perform the spiritual exercises. But the greatest assemblage took place in Holy Week. From the town of Corato alone from thirty to forty people came to the house at Iliceto every year, although it was a two days' journey, and as many as sixty have been numbered from Cerignola.

From admiring the happy amendment which all who frequented our houses underwent, King Charles, and afterwards his son Ferdinand, sent us persons of high rank, both ecclesiastics and laymen, of whom they had reason to complain, and towards whom the princes did not wish to adopt severe measures, and they used to stay near us for some time. The name of our Fathers at Ciorani became so renowned at court, that they were looked on as a penance for all evils: and in this respect the Bishops and Superiors of orders had also cause to rejoice.

Alphonso was comforted by all this, but the fervour and the zeal which he saw throughout

his Congregation filled up the measure of his joy. The rule was in force in all the houses; there was everywhere the same love for holy poverty; resistance and excuses were unknown, for even the intentions of the Superiors were held in reverence. The old were models for the young, and the young in turn excited the emulation of the old, who feared to see their ardour become lessened. But that which put the crowning stroke to Alphonso's happiness, was the saintly death of many of his children, among whom Father Sportelli and a lay-brother named Gerard Mayello,* were especially remarkable, and they never cease to aid those who have recourse to them in their sufferings.

Such was Alphonso's Congregation only thirty years after its foundation. It is the little grain of the gospel, named by our blessed Saviour, which, although but small at the beginning, becomes nevertheless a majestic tree, under which the birds of heaven take their rest. So our Congregation, although small at its birth, soon developed itself in an admirable manner, watered as it was by the sweat and the tears of Alphonso. Moved and filled with joy at the wonderful increase of holiness and the consequent lustre which the humble disciple of Jesus Christ spread around him, a number of distinguished men gloried in joining him in order to call souls to a state of grace.

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* An Abridgment of his Life will be found at the end of this work.

BOOK III.

"Oportet episcopum sine crimine esse, sicut Dei dispensatorem ....hospitatem, benignum sobrium, justum, sanctum, continentem, amplectentem eum, qui secundum doctrinam est, fidelem sermonem, ut potens sit exhortari in doctrinâ saná, et eos qui contradicunt arguere." *Epist. ad Tit. cap.* 1.

"Oportet espicopum formam esse justitiæ, sanctimoniæ speculum, pietatis exemplar, assertorem veritatis, fidei defensorem, pastorem plebium, magistrum insipientium, refugium oppressorum, pauperem, advocatum, miserorum spem, tutorem pupillorum, judicem viduarum, oculum cæcorum, linguam mutorum, baculum senum, ultorem scelerum, malorum metum, honorum gloriam."

S. Bernard, lib. 4. *de Considerat.*

CHAPTER I.

Alphonso was now nearly seventy years of age. Laden with infirmities he believed himself already at the end of his course, and was prepared to close it happily, when God in His wonderful providence made him enter into another career, in order that he might labour for His glory by new works and in new combats.

The episcopal see of St. Agatha of the Goths had become vacant by the death of Bishop Flaminius Danza. The succession to it was solicited by at least sixty candidates, amongst whom were included Bishops and even Archbishops. Before entering into a detail of the negociations which

had for their end and result the promotion of Alphonso to the episcopacy, I must say a few words on St. Agatha of the Goths itself.

This town, which is situated at the foot of Mount Taburno, between Benevento and Capua, in the Abruzzi, and on the borders of the ancient Samnium, has replaced the ancient Saticola, which existed from the most distant period in Italy. Titus Livius in the 7th book of the First Decade, chapter 8th, relates that the Romans defeated the Samnites in the valley of Saticola, under the consulate of Cornelius. Virgil in the 7th Æneid speaks of the rudeness of the inhabitants of this country:

"Accola Vulturni pariterque Saticulus asper."

This same town is also mentioned in the second letter which Cicero wrote to Atticus from his Pompeian Villa. Matthew Egizio in his treatise proves clearly to Bishop Langlet, that St. Agatha is nothing but the ancient Saticola. "This is the secret route," says he, "that Marcellus must have taken in returning from Cannes, after having passed the Volturno, close to Calazia, (now Cajazzo,) to go to Suessola and from thence to Nola." Pratillo maintains this opinion in his Appia. Francis Ranione, a nobleman of Capua and Archdeacon of St. Agatha, strengthens the same idea by many proofs in a dissertation inserted in the Recueils Florentins.

The strongest proof that St. Agatha comes from the ancient Saticola is given by the Etruscan medals which have been found there, and

which now adorn the royal museum of Portici, and by a quantity of sepulchral stones and magnificent Etruscan vases which are daily being dug up in the trenches, and which attract so many travellers to St. Agatha from beyond the mountains. The Archdeacon Rainone maintains that Saticola was, in its origin, a colony of Etruscans. We know that this people established themselves amongst us in the environs of the Volturno, and that the Samnites adopted their language. After the Samnites were subjugated by the Romans, the colony became under the republic Saticola. The monumental stones and the tombs of Roman families which are daily discovered are sufficient proofs, as also the consular and imperial medals which are to be found.

It is unknown when and by whom Saticola was destroyed; it is not even known at what time the faith was carried there. The Cathedral is ancient: it has suffered much in the vicissitudes which have, at different times, exposed it to the sword and the fire of soldiery: no account of it has been preserved, whether ecclesiatical or civil. It is said that when St. Peter passed from Brindisi to Rome to bring the faith to Benevento and Capua, he made it known also at Saticola. At least, if it were not received there from this great apostle, it was conveyed thither by some one of the apostolic men whom St. Peter himself sent into these countries. On its re-establishment Saticola was called the Dark Forest, (Silva Oscura,) or the

Dark Valley. As the Goths were pleased with its situation they rebuilt the place and gave it the name of St. Agatha. The Goths had much devotion for this glorious martyr, under whose protection they placed many countries which they had either formed or re-established. The title of St. Agatha of the Goths reminds us, that this town was fortified and inhabited by this conquering people. At a later period it was again buried in ruins by the devastations of war. Deprived of inhabitants and buildings, it remained for a long time without clergy and without a bishop.

When it was re-established, Landolphi, first metropolitan of Benevento, restored its cathedral in the year 971. The first bishop was Madelfido, a priest of Benevento, and the diploma which he received from Landolphi is in itself another monument which shows the antiquity of this church. Among the successors of Madelfido a great number are to be found who were distinguished either by birth or sanctity. St. Agatha prides itself most for having had for its Bishop Cardinal Monlatto, who was afterwards Pope Sixtus V. If more ample notices of St. Agatha are desired, they are furnished in a book called "Avellino Sacro," by Father della Buona, a Minorite, in the "History of the Kingdom of Naples," by Father John Anastasius, and in the "Annals," by our Father Alexander of Meo.

Clement XIII. was much embarrassed by the number of competitors for the see of St. Agatha, as he wished to give it only to the most worthy,

in despite of the worldly motives which actuated most amongst them. The claims of one of the candidates were singularly favoured at Naples by a very high personage. The Pope on the contrary could not approve them without seriously compromising his conscience, and he foresaw that his refusal would occasion much annoyance and trouble. He consulted his Cardinals, and Cardinal Spinelli gave the advice which was followed: namely, to choose as Bishop a man whose merits surpassed those of all the rest; and he did not hesitate to propose Alphonso, who, from the lustre of his origin, science, and sanctity, enjoyed esteem as general as it was merited. This choice was calculated to put to silence every pretension and to end every anxiety. The holy Father relished the project, and without loss of time wrote to Naples to the nuncio, Mgr. Socatelli, to inform him of what had passed. Cardinal Negroni, the auditor, sent a letter to Alphonso at the same time to inform him in the name of the Pope of his election to the bishopric of St. Agatha. The news of the Sovereign Pontiff's decision being spread through Rome, filled all those who knew the future bishop with joy. His name was celebrated, and the satisfaction was such that many prelates, and particularly the Cardinals Orsini and Cartelli, went to thank the Pope. Many other distinguished people, amongst others Prince Piombino and Don Gaetan Buon-Compagno, who had known Alphonso at Naples, were so rejoiced at this nomination that they presented themselves

in person to his Holiness, and congratulated him on having raised so learned and holy a man to the episcopate. The town and diocese of St. Agatha desired as anxiously as the Pope to have a worthy bishop at the head of their church, of which it stood in great need. As soon as Archdeacon Don Francis Rainone, (a venerable man and full of zeal,) was nominated Vicar Capitular of St. Agatha, he, together with the most devoted of the clergy, exerted all their power to obtain from God a bishop such as they desired. Immediately after the funeral of the defunct Bishop Danza, a triduo was solemnly celebrated in the cathedral, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and in order to interest the people the more, Father Thomas Maria Caputo, professor of theology at the seminary, was asked to preach on a subject referring to the circumstances. The pious preacher showed forcibly the great loss which the absence of its pastor caused to a diocese, and the great good which it would be for all the inhabitants to be governed by a well-informed and zealous bishop; he showed also how necessary it was that all should address their prayers to God for this object. Besides this, the archdeacon sent a circular throughout the diocese, to enjoin the curés, to observe in each of their churches the same solemnities as in the cathedral.

While this matter was being settled at Rome the mind of Alphonso was occupied with any thing but this church and bishopric; one day when conversing with Bishop Nicholas Borgia,

of Cava, on the mercies of God in rescuing him from the world, he said, "One of the greatest graces that I have received from the Lord, is that of having escaped the peril of being a bishop, a peril which I should have had difficulty in avoiding had I remained with my family." He added, that the thing would certainly have happened, as his director, Father Pagani, showed that he was much inclined for it, by expressing a wish that if the dignity of canon should be offered to him he should refuse it, but not that of bishop. Thus thought Alphonso, but God had other designs regarding him.

A courier arrived at Nocera during the morning of the 9th of March, 1792, with a letter from the Cardinal Nuncio. Alphonso knew not what to think. There were two letters, one from Cardinal Negrini, which announced to him his election to the bishopric of St. Agatha in the name of the Pope, and the other from the Nuncio, in which the former was inclosed. On reading them Alphonso became as if thunderstruck; his senses became troubled, and he could not speak. As soon as the community were informed of it they hastened to his room; they found him agitated, silent, and bathed in tears. After recovering himself he became tranquil, persuaded that his refusal would immediately end all, and that the election was only a mere mark of esteem which the Pope wished to give him, without thinking of using any solicitations about it. His companions thought the same. "Be in peace," said Father Ferrara to him, "such refusals are

easily accepted; do you not remember that since you renounced the Archbishopric of Palermo, the matter has remained in forgetfulness?" Alphonso in consequence wrote a letter to the Cardinal Auditor, in which he thanked the Pope for his goodness, and exposed his own incapacity, his great age and infirmities, the vow by which he engaged never to accept any dignity, and the scandal which his consent would give in the Congregation. When the courier was gone, Alphonso said to Father Corsano, "See, this storm has cost me an hour and four ducats," alluding to the money he was obliged to give to the messenger; he then added that he would not exchange the Congregation for all the kingdoms of the Grand Turk. He wrote at the same time to Cardinal Spinelli, to let him know the motives which had made him determine to refuse the honour which was offered to him; and he insisted much on the vow which retained him among his companions. "If I saw," said he, "one of the Congregation accept a bishopric, I should shed tears of blood; what scandal, if I myself gave the example! and what injury should I not cause to the fervour of all belonging to me! I should believe myself lost, and if God permitted it, should regard it as a chastisement for my sins and my extreme pride." He wrote the same thing to his friend, the Abbé Bruin, who had much influence with the Cardinal.

The next day Bishop Borgia came to see him, and gave him a confidential letter from Cardinal Spinelli; he said that his Holiness wished that

Alphonso should immediately accept the bishopric, to take him out of his embarrassment, but that he should be at liberty to renounce it afterwards when affairs became more tranquil. This visit of Bishop Borgia threw Alphonso into new consternation and greater than the first. Persuaded, on seeing the circumstances, that the Pope would throw difficulties in the way of accepting the resignation, he understood that he had no hope left but in God, and he made his brethren pray that the Lord would deign to exempt him from this punishment, which he always acknowledged to have deserved by his sins. In the sermon which he gave the following Saturday, he recommended himself to the prayers of the people; he commenced his penances, he condemned himself to a severe fast, he diminished his sleep, and neglected no method to appease what he considered so violent a tempest. Bishop Borgia, on his part, being persuaded that Alphonso, on account of his age and infirmities, was incapable of bearing such a burthen, felt it right to inform Cardinal Spinelli, and to support the representation which Alphonso had made to him.

As the time drew near when the decision was to be taken at Rome, the disquietude of Alphonso increased. At times he re-assured himself by thinking of the vow which he had made to renounce all dignities, and as that was an essential part of his rule he hoped the Pope would not easily resolve to constrain him; but soon the idea came to mind that the holy Father could dispense him from his vow, and this made him

quite disconsolate. We partook in his fears. "And if the Pope should command you?" Father Mazzini said to him; "The will of God be always done," replied Alphonso bending his head. In spite of his extreme agitation he was heard repeating incessantly in every place, "May the will of God be done." He remained balancing between fear and hope, but fear had the preponderance. "If the courier comes," he said several times to Fathers Ferrara and Mazzini, "do not let me see him, for he would seem to me like an executioner with the axe in his hand." His brother Hercules, who was at Naples, having asked him how things went on, Alphonso wrote to him, "I am waiting to see God's will, to obey according as His good pleasure may dispose of the few days which remain to me. They will last but little longer; yesterday I felt very ill."

There was no delay in telling the election of St. Alphonso at St. Agatha; the news made the good rejoice as much as it distressed the wicked. The zeal of the holy missionaries was well known. When his refusal was heard there the pious redoubled their supplications to God, praying Him to dispose all according to His greater glory and for the good of a diocese which was in great spiritual need.

While Alphonso was grieving at Nocera, his refusal was agitating the Roman court. The Pope was dissatisfied and troubled; but many well qualified people who were acquainted with the reasons alleged by St. Alphonso, hastened to intercede in his favour, especially dwelling on

his age and his enfeebled frame. Cardinal Spinelli, informed of the state of St. Alphonso, pleaded his cause himself, though with regret. On the evening of the 14th of March the Pope seemed disposed to accept the resignation, but the next morning he decided to the contrary, without any one knowing why it was so. "I adore the inscrutable counsels of God," the Abbé Bruin wrote to Bishop Borgia: "the Pope consented to accept the resignation at an opportune time, but yesterday morning, of his own accord, and without our knowing why, he ordered the Cardinal Auditor to expedite the letters of command, and I know that the same evening they were notified to his Eminence the Nuncio. Mgr. the Auditor made some observation, I know not what, to the Pope: his Holiness replied in a tone of authority, that he willed it to be so. Cardinal Spinelli, quite silenced by this change, bowed his head saying, 'God wills it. The voice of the Pope is the voice of God.'" Abbé Bruin finished his letter by these words: "His Eminence the Auditor will send a letter to the future bishop couched in suitable terms for a learned religious of noble birth. Indeed, the Pope, still better informed of the nobility of Alphonso, of his talents and his merits in regard to Church and State, caused him to be addressed in a style worthy of his high reputation and of the esteem which his works had gained him, not only in Naples and throughout Italy, but in a great part of Europe.

On the evening of the 18th of March, 1762,

towards six o'clock, the messenger of the nuncio appeared again at Nocera. Fathers Ferrara and Mazzini received him, and opened the letters which he brought for him themselves. When they saw the firm resolve of the Pope, they went to seek Alphonso, but before letting him know the truth, they got him to recite an Ave Maria with them. While they prayed Alphonso felt his heart beat, and cried, "The courier has returned!" They confessed it, and told him the Pope commanded him to accept. He then raised his eyes to heaven, bent his head in token of submission, and pronounced these words, "Obmutui, quia tu fecisti;" then becoming thoughtful, he added, "It is the will of God, God sends me out of the Congregation for my sins;" then turning towards the Fathers, said to them, "Do not forget me. Ah! must it be that we shall separate after having loved each other during thirty years!" On this he was silent, and his eyes became bathed in tears. The Fathers Mazzini and Ferrara told him to cheer him, that he could not lack friends at Rome who would cause the motives of his renunciation to prevail. "It is not possible," replied Alphonso, "to make explanations. The Pope has declared himself in absolute terms which do not permit it: I must obey." At these words he fell into such convulsions that he remained speechless for five hours. When he came to himself, he wrote to the Cardinal Nuncio and to the Auditor, that he was ready to accept the bishopric, and to submit to the will of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Alphonso was soon convinced that such was the will of God concerning him. Abbé Bruin, in his reply to a letter which he had received, said, "All the difficulties which Bishop Borgia put forward to induce his Holiness to accept the resignation have been scrupulously laid before the Pope, who had already a very accurate knowledge of them. Be persuaded then that he has not been ignorant of any of the reasons that you gave in your letter to the Auditor. The latter has not been able to learn what could have led his Holiness to change his opinion so suddenly, but he has ordered that the formal command that you should submit should be notified to you. Your Lordship will know when you come to do homage at the feet of the holy Father. I conclude from this, (and Cardinal Spinelli is of the same opinion,) that the Lord has willed this unexpected change for His greater glory."

The refusal of Alphonso to accept the bishopric of St. Agatha had caused a great sensation; all Rome was edified, and this edification increased still more when his unreasoning obedience and complete submission to the will of the Pope was known. The same Abbé Bruin wrote as follows to Alphonso on this subject: "Cardinal Spinelli has been moved by the perusal of the letter which your Lordship addressed to me; he admired your incomparable resignation to the voice of the Lord. I advise you to write to him immediately; your letter will console him much, and give him great pleasure."

Let it not be displeasing that I quote here to

satisfy the exactitude of history, the whole of the letters of Mgr. the Auditor, and Mgr. the Nuncio.

To begin with the letter of the Auditor, Cardinal Negroni; it is dated 16th of March: "The various considerations into which you entered, Reverend Father, in your letter of the 9th of this month, in order to exempt yourself from the government of the vacant Church of St. Agatha of the Goths, were exposed by me to his Holiness. He was much edified by the solicitude and religious attachment which you manifested for the Congregation you have founded, and which is a work so advantageous to religion, so fruitful in spiritual good; but after an attentive examination his Holiness remains persuaded that his first decision was called for by the wants of the Church of St. Agatha, and the motives that you offer have not been sufficient to cause him to change his resolution. In consequence he has ordered me to let you know that the fixed will of the holy Father is, that you should reply to his voice immediately, and that renouncing every pretext of excuse for the future, you should accept purely and simply those functions where your zeal will find a vast field wherein to exercise itself, and where you can, as much as in your Congregation, labour for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. For this end his Holiness dispenses and frees you from the vow under which you were engaged, after the rule of your institute, never to accept any ecclesiastical dignity. You understand then, most Reverend Father,

that the will of his Holiness is firmly fixed on this subject; and I doubt not that you will conform yourself to it promptly with a religious obedience, taking time, however, for presenting yourself for examination, and to be promoted in consistory. Having nothing further to say, except to give you an assurance of my profound respect, which I desire to be able to prove to you personally by my services, I beg you to receive," &c.

Now let us see how Mgr. the Nuncio Socatelli wrote on the 19th of the same month: "I must transmit to your Lordship a second letter from Mgr. the Auditor of the holy Father, on the subject of your election to the episcopal see of St. Agatha of the Goths. You will learn there that the formal intention of his Holiness is, that you should accept the government of this church; it is with this view that he frees you from the vow that you have taken in conformity with the rule of your Congregation. I have nothing to add to what Mgr. the Auditor has written to you, persuaded that you will see that in the words of the visible Head of the Church, a call is given you by its invisible Head, and that in consequence you will bow to the Divine Will. Allow me to say that we all know that your Lordship has not asked for the episcopate, that on the contrary you refused it when offered; but we know also that an obstinate refusal would be an open resistance to the command of God. You know not what may be the designs of God for you, nor the good which may result from your election, for the diocese you are called to govern,

and for the Congregation that you are about to quit. All that was humanly possible has been employed to make the motives you alleged available. His Eminence the Auditor exposed them to his Holiness, and I strengthened them and made every effort to show how reasonable they were. Notwithstanding these representations, his Holiness persisted in his resolution. You see then plainly that all this comes from the Father of Light, as the spirit of the Lord gives His aid to His Church, particularly in things that concern it most. I have entered into these details in order to anticipate every objection; I hope that you will correspond to your divine vocation, and that you will in consequence give to the Vicar of Jesus Christ a perfect assurance of your submission to his commands. I wait for your answer with impatience, in order to communicate it to Mgr. the Auditor, together with the letters I shall address to him to-morrow evening. I renew the assurance of my perfect esteem to your most illustrious Lordship, and I am," &c.

CHAPTER II.

When Don Hercules heard at Naples that his brother had accepted the episcopate he rejoiced, and hastened to offer his services which might be necessary to him under the circumstances. Alphonso replied, and the letter he wrote was as follows: "My dear brother, I have been so

stunned by the command of the Pope that I should accept the Bishopric on obedience, that my ideas seem to have left me, when I think that I must separate myself from the society amongst which I have lived during thirty years. Thank you for your offer of advancing the money; I had thought of writing to the Pope to inform him humbly of the embarrassment in which I find myself on account of the expense which the completion of the bulls and many other necessary things will cause me. Who knows if the indigence in which I am is not sufficient cause to make me hope to be delivered from the bishopric? I begged Cardinal Spinelli to endeavour to do me this good office, and he has done just the contrary. What do you wish that I should say? You rejoice, for me I can only weep. I have lost my sleep and appetite, I am beside myself, a fever seized me this morning, and this evening whilst I write it is not gone. I ask of myself why my old age is to be afflicted by the painful labours of the episcopate, and how it is that the Pope, who never gives such commands, has adopted a tone of such severity with me? To conclude, may the will of God be done; He desires the sacrifice of the rest of my life; I must submit whatever I may wish."

When the news of the promotion of St. Alphonso reached Venice, Don Remondini did not fail to rejoice at it; he wrote a letter of congratulation to the new bishop, who replied, thanking him, and assuring him that his only consolation in the pain which he felt was in blindly

obeying the command of the Sovereign Pontiff, who had placed this burthen upon him, and he ended by saying how much he was concerned at having been the object of so unusual an order, which had filled the towns of Naples and Rome with astonishment. After having accepted the bishopric, Alphonso did not understand following the custom of the bishops of the kingdom, who came to Naples and established themselves in some dwelling whose luxury seemed to accord with their own high dignity. Our saint, who thought differently, wrote thus to his brother: "As regards the house, I do not want to charge myself with its expenses. I think that when I come to Naples one or two rooms on the first floor will be enough for me to receive the people in who may wish to speak to me. The top story shall be reserved for the missionaries." Brother Francis Tartaglione also wrote to him to know what furniture our house should be adorned with for his reception. "I hope," replied Alphonso, "that I shall not return to Naples, but in any case, four straw chairs will be enough for me." He told him that he must think of procuring a carriage and taking a livery. "If I have accepted the bishopric by obedience," replied Alphonso, "I must follow the example of saintly bishops: do not speak to me then about a carriage or livery. What good will it do me to act the great Lord in Naples." Bishops Borgia and Volpi, and above all his director, Father Villani, having shown him the necessity of a carriage he consented to it, but did his best to have only

an old one, and of little value. "Yes, Sir, I am resolved to buy one," he wrote to his brother Hercules, "but I wish to see beforehand if the late bishop has not left a carriage which might do, because I should have that much cheaper. I shall be in Naples this week or next, and we will speak about it, for the short stay I shall make in that town I have no need to buy a carriage and mules immediately. I will use the carriage of the Cordeliers for the visits I shall have to pay there."

Great as was the submission of Alphonso to the will of the Pope, he made so violent an effort, and experienced such internal constraint, that he nearly lost his life. Fever seized him on the morning of the 20th of March. At first it was thought to be a cold, but the symptoms soon became so alarming that his life appeared in danger. Bishops Volpi and Borgia took no rest, and knew not how to relieve him. They knew the cause of his malady, but they saw no remedy. Every endeavour at consolation was useless, for the thorn which pierced his heart was the episcopate, which he looked on as a chastisement for his sins. "Just are the judgments of God," he often exclaimed; "the Lord casts me out of the Congregation for my sins!" During all his torments one thing alone brought relief to him, it was the hope of being able to re-enter the order. "I believe it is certain," he said to Bishop Volpi, "that after God's anger is appeased, and I hope that my prayers and zeal in fulfilling my duties may disarm it

in a few years, I am certain that then the Pope will have pity on my sorrows, and will willingly choose a more worthy person for St. Agatha; then he will send me back here to die, within these very walls from whence now I am going out."

When it became known that his life was in danger, Mgr. Giannini arrived from Settero to visit him. Many gentlemen and ecclesiastics of distinction hastened from neighbouring towns for the same purpose. Bishops Borgia and Volpi were continually with him. The illustrious Sersale himself wrote from Naples to console him and fortify his heart by wise reflections. The evil however increased, and the end was feared more and more.

While these things were taking place at Nocera, Pope Clement XIII. could not sufficiently rejoice at the docility of St. Alphonso; he wished to testify to him the satisfaction he felt. So Mgr. the Cardinal Auditor wrote to the holy man the following letter, dated March 20th, 1762: "I have the pleasure of being able to address this letter to you, most Reverend Father, to assure your Reverence that his Holiness has learnt with extreme satisfaction that, submitting your own will to his determinations, you have resigned and disposed yourself to accept the episcopal government of St. Agatha. I am fully persuaded that the merit of your acquiescence in the call of the Lord will obtain abundant strength for you, and all desirable assistance for the accomplishment of your duties in this diocese. May

this assurance of the holy Father's satisfaction, which I communicate to you in his name, console you until you are able to come to Rome, and to be convinced of it in person. His Holiness has had the kindness to consent that you shall defer this journey on account of the inclemency of the present season, so that you can undertake it at your convenience, regulating yourself however according to the advice of the agent of the holy Father, in order to be present at the next consistory. For my part, most Reverend Father, I desire nothing so much as to be able to give you new proofs of the respect and esteem with which I am," &c.

This letter arrived when Alphonso was in the height of the fever. As soon as Don Hercules heard at Naples the dangerous state of his brother, he hastened to Nocera, bringing one of the most skilful physicians of that capital with him. Alphonso, when interrogated as to his state, replied, "I am under the hand of God." Those of us who were at Ciorani had not failed to visit him. This step on the part of his religious however was far from consoling him; on seeing them he began to weep, and said, "You are come to expel me from the Congregation;" and when Don Hercules strove to make him recover his courage, he replied, "I wish always to do the will of God." His malady at last became so serious that they believed at Naples and at Rome that he was dead. The Pope was extremely afflicted, and doubted if he were still alive; he said, "If he dies, we shall give him our apostolical bene-

diction; but if he lives we wish to have him in Rome." All the Congregation were in alarm, and public prayers were addressed to God in all the houses, each feeling deep interest in the life of him whom he looked on as his father.

The submission of Alphonso to the will of the Pope produced quite an ecstasy of joy at St. Agatha. The gladness was general. The chapter deputed several canons to congratulate him, but their sorrowful surprise on finding him in bed and in danger of death was as great as their ardent desire of becoming acquainted with him whom God had destined to be their father. Their congratulations became rather words of condolence. On their return to St. Agatha this news spread consternation among the inhabitants, and in union with the clergy they addressed their prayers to God that he would deign to restore the health of him who was to be their pastor.

The refusal to accept the bishopric, and the subsequent definite acceptance, produced an equally great sensation at Naples. Both the one determination and the other had given much edification to all. In the refusal a new proof of detachment from dignities was given by the pious religious, and in his acceptance his great submission to the visible Head of the Church was to be admired. The Marquis Tanucci did not think thus, but probably he did not know all. He admired his refusal, but he was afflicted at his acceptance. Many years afterwards, Counsellor Celano went to this minister to beg a favour for Alphonso. "How was it!" he replied

with emphasis, "Bishop Liguori refused the bishopric of Palermo which the King offered to him, and after that he accepted that of St. Agatha which was offered to him by the court of Rome?" "He was prevented from accepting that of Palermo," replied the counsellor, "because he had made a vow not to accept any dignity; he equally refused that of St. Agatha; and if he accepted it at last it was because the Pope obliged him to do it by a formal obedience; if the King had given him the same commandment for the Archbishopric of Palermo, he would have accepted that just the same." This answer embarrassed the Marquis, but he would not yield. "The King," he said, "does not force, but he wishes to be obeyed." However, the Marquis Tanucci did not cease to support Alphonso, for whom he had great veneration.

CHAPTER III.

That our Saint escaped from the death which his promotion to the episcopate nearly caused, must be attributed to a real miracle. As his mind resumed its calmness he abandoned himself to the will of the Pope. His body also regained its strength, and his health became re-established. When his humility would have opposed itself to the will of the Pope, he was heard to recollect himself and to say, "God wills that I

shall be a bishop, and for my part, I will to be a bishop." He was in this disposition of mind when, on the morning of Easter day, finding that he was almost well, he took the sudden resolution of going to his bishopric. He entered then without loss of time into one of those miserable carriages which are called mantice, and set out for Naples, from whence he had to repair to Rome. He was accompanied by Father Villani. He hoped that the sight of so poor an equipage would lead the Pope to exempt him from the charge, the weight of which appalled him so much in prospect.

On the Saturday before his departure he did not omit to preach according to custom in our church in honour of the Holy Virgin Mary, and he did it in so pathetic a tone that he affected all his audience in an extraordinary degree.

On his way he visited his brothers of Nocera, and his adieus were the more moving, from all who heard him believing it to be for the last time in their Church. Each one treasured up his instructions: he recommended them to persevere in the fear of God, and in devotion to the most Blessed Virgin Mary. He begged all there present never to forget him in their prayers, in order that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin might aid him to bear the load which they had placed on him, and he on his part promised always to remember them. After that he added, "Do not afflict yourselves, my dear brothers, because I am going away; I promise that I will return here again to end my days." The

emotion became great, every one melted into tears, not being able to help regretting the loss of a man who had so many titles to their love.

On passing by the Tower of the Annunziata, he stopt for a few moments at the house of the Garganos, who had begged him to grant them this favour. They were a family of whom all the members were much devoted to Alphonso. They had been accustomed to hear at times a mission from him, at others a novena, now they saw themselves deprived for the future of his instructions, so they were very eager in soliciting them for this the last time.

They were grieved to see the uneasiness which his dignity of bishop caused him. "I go to Rome," he said to them, "but I am sure that my representations which have been powerless at a distance, will be more favourably heard when I am on the spot; the holy Father will let me go and die among my brothers when he only finds in me a miserable carcass."

He found fresh subjects of distress on his arrival at Naples. Being obliged to pay his respects to the ministers and the magistrates, and finding himself beset at home by the crowd who came to compliment him, he required all his virtue to bear this new mode of life. "Recommend me, and let me be recommended by others very particularly to Jesus Christ," he wrote to Father Mazzini on the 14th of April; "if I do not lose my senses now, I shall never lose them. Unhappy that I am, I left the world in my youth, and now in my old age I have to begin again to hold intercourse with it."

He was received in the most honourable way by the Nuncio, by the Grand Almoner, and by Cardinal Sersale. The governors of the Infant Don Ferdinand gave him especial marks of veneration, and promised him their protection, as did also the four ministers of state, and above all, the Marquises of Tanucci and of Marco. His friends, knowing his distaste for dignities, did not come to congratulate him, but rather to condole with him.

These visits were like those which Job received from his friends, who pitied by silence rather than by speaking. Some years before Alphonso heard during his stay in Naples that his friend, Father Janvier Fatigati, was going to be elected to the bishopric of Cassano. He went to see him one morning before break of day, and met him on the threshold of the door. "Father Janvier," he said to him with ardour, "do not accept the episcopate, if you do you will be damned." He feared beforehand being raised to the same dignity, which would take him away from his rising Congregation, and he foresaw that he could not accept it without detriment to the glory of God. But how hidden are the ways of God on high! Alphonso in his turn received at the time we are speaking of the visit of Father Fatigati, who, more fortunate than himself, had been able to decline the episcopate. When they met they were mutually silent, their eyes were bathed in tears, and the features of Alphonso showed the bitterness which rent his heart, while those of Father Fati-

gati depicted the compassion he felt for his friend. Hercules Liguori was far from feeling these sentiments; on the contrary, he rejoiced in the elevation of his brother. Alphonso, dissatisfied at seeing him so well pleased, said to him one day half offended, "You are not capable of procuring consolation for a poor Christian. Ah! if you knew what a bishopric is, and what it is to have to render an account of the souls of others to God!"

During these trials he did not forget to steal some time from the world to go and visit in their convents his daughters in Jesus Christ. When they knew the grief which preyed on him, and the danger his life had been in, they hastened to have recourse to God, to pray Him to restore his peace and health. He begged all of them to redouble their supplications to God, that He would dispose all things so as to promote His greater glory. "I am illustrious now because I am a Bishop," said he one day to Sister Mary Graziano; "but when the Pope sees how broken and infirm I am he will say, 'Retire, the episcopate is not fit for you.' Pray much," he added, "for God can do all things." When he visited Sister Mary Desio, his penitent, whom God had favoured with His gifts, and whom he found in bed in the hospital of the Magdalene, he said to her, "When I go to Rome, and am at the feet of his Holiness, the Pope will plainly see what a miserable creature I am, and how incapable of bearing the cross and mitre."

As soon as his arrival at Naples became known

at St. Agatha, a great number of noblemen and gentlemen went there to congratulate him. The humility of Alphonso filled them with admiration. They were equally surprised at his affability and the tranquillity of his mind. They found nothing imperious in him, for they saw a man who was a foe to pomp, whose heart was quite their own, and full of sweetness and sincerity. On their return to St. Agatha, they did not cease to eulogize their Bishop and to publish his virtues throughout all the diocese, so that before he was known there Alphonso was desired and proclaimed as a Saint.

The expenditure of Alphonso when at Naples for his equipment was really extraordinary: his episcopal ring cost only a few carlins, it was adorned with a simple bit of glass; the brilliants in his pastoral cross were also made of false stones. When Porpora gave it to him, Alphonso said, on looking at it, "Oh, what a heavy cross you bring me!" "What! heavy!" replied the workman with astonishment. "Yes, heavy," answered Alphonso, bending his head twice. "Alas! it is so weighty that I know nothing more overwhelming."

Before he set out from Nocera he wrote to Cardinal Spinelli to tell him of the command which the Pope had given him, and to beg him to see if he could find some method to dispense him from obeying it. He received the following answer at Naples: "Your letter has reached me at Cisterna, where I am on visitation. I have the honour to inform you how much I rejoice

in the re-establishment of your health, and that I am quite unable to make the smallest representation to his Holiness in your favour, for I shall not be in Rome till June, and besides in so doing I should fill an odious office which would not suit me at all." The Cardinal was sorry for the pain which Alphonso felt, but did not regret being unable to remedy it.

CHAPTER IV.

On Monday 19th April, after Easter week, Alphonso, accompanied by Father Villani, set out for Rome. He expected to find Cardinal Spinelli at Velletri, but as he was still absent Alphonso stopped at the seminary in that town, where he was congratulated by several noblemen; after waiting two days for the Cardinal he went to Cisterna, where he found him. His Eminence could not help smiling on seeing him; but Alphonso said at once, "My Lord, you have not acted fairly towards me." The Cardinal had a high opinion of Alphonso; his refusal of the episcopate had edified him; his prompt obedience to the Pope edified him still more. He related what had passed at Rome concerning him; he told him that the Pope said on receiving his resignation, that he would recommend the matter to God, and that he had himself begun to set about choosing another; but a little afterwards his Holiness called the Cardinal, and said to him,

"I do not understand this, I will command Father Liguori to accept." The two bishops conversed on many things which concerned the Church. The Cardinal urged his visitor to undertake the burthen of the episcopate courageously. "My Lord," he said to him, "be sure of the assistance of God, for your divine vocation is most certain." The Cardinal would have kept Alphonso some days with him, but he could not consent to it. When they separated the Cardinal encouraged Alphonso, recommended him to fear nothing at Rome, and promised to take away all the difficulties which might present themselves.

The first thing which our Saint did on arriving in Rome was to visit the tomb of St. Peter. He remained before the altar in a sort of ecstasy for more than an hour, and he stayed for a long time on his knees to honour the statue of the holy apostle which is in the Vatican besides.

They were so prepossessed in his favour at Rome that he was welcomed everywhere with especial marks of esteem. The Fathers of the Congregation of Pious Workers wished to have him in their house; every one met him on the threshold of their door; and his intimate friend, Father Songobardi, loaded him with a thousand marks of attention. Cardinal Orsini went to see him twice; the Cardinals Gallo and Antonelli, Mgr. the Vice Manager, together with Cardinal Spinelli and others, visited him several times. Father Ricci, General of the Society of Jesus, went

three times to see him. The Duke of Sora, Prince of Piombino, Don Gaétan Buon-Campagno, being at Frescati, and hearing of his arrival, begged him to lodge in his palace, and offered him the use of a carriage. Alphonso declined the dwelling-place, but accepted the carriage, which his weakness and great age rendered indispensable to him. He went to Frascati one day, and the Duke received him with distinction.

The Abbé Bruni went to see him also: he had taken part with Cardinal Spinelli in Alphonso's nomination to the episcopate; the latter, who knew this, could not help gently reproaching him by representing his incapacity. "I have no quality which fits me in the least degree for a Bishop, but I submit because the Pope commands, and God wills that I should obey him." He said also to Abbé Toppi, who was a professor in Rome, and went to congratulate him, "Father Reader, the Pope wills that I should be bishop, but I have come to let him see that I am but a machine out of order." He would have made the circuit of Rome had he accepted all the invitations he received; but he excused himself very courteously to all; his humility made him quick in finding pretexts for so doing. The Fathers of the Mission of St. Vincent of Paul invited him to dinner one day: "My Fathers," he said to them, "please to give my dinner to Jesus Christ's poor for me, in order that He may let me see His holy will distinctly while I am at Rome." Cardinal Orsini

invited him to his table; Alphonso wished to excuse himself again, but it was in vain; his attendant told him that his Eminence had invited other great personages to meet him; the reception which he met with from the Cardinal deserves to be repeated. Alphonso in his change of state had made no change of habit, and even in Rome he gloried in wearing the cassock of his order. When he was preparing to go to the Cardinal's, he was told that he ought not to present himself there in such a dress. When Mgr. Testa had wished to go in his cassock, the Cardinal's steward persuaded him to change it for a court dress; but Alphonso did not attend to this advice, and so when he met the Cardinal he said to him, "My Lord, I am come as I was." The Cardinal smiled. "I know," added Alphonso, "that you are ashamed of me." "Well, my wish is, that you should shame me," answered the Cardinal; then he embraced him heartily and led him into his cabinet.

Alphonso suffered a great deal at Naples from the numerous visits and compliments with which he was loaded, but it was much worse at Rome. "The time which must pass before I can leave Rome seems like a thousand years," he wrote to his brother Hercules. "How I long to be free from all their ceremonial! and yet I receive such testimonies of respect here!" He was much grieved at the expenses he was obliged to go to. "Here," he added in the same letter, "presents alone exhaust one; there is plenty of ceremonial but also of money." He

was so overwhelmed with visits that he had hardly time to pray to God, and this it was which afflicted him the most. On his arrival he heard that the Pope was at Civita Vecchia, from whence he could not return immediately. Alphonso resolved to go, in the meanwhile, to Loretto, to visit the Holy House. Father Villani tried to dissuade him from it, to save him from this additional fatigue. "My good Mother Mary will strengthen me," Alphonso answered; "when will so favourable an opportunity offer again? Nothing will hurt me, if I can have the satisfaction of visiting this house where the Eternal Word became man for me."

This journey, like that from Naples to Rome, was to Alphonso a time of continual union with God. He commenced before day-break by a long meditation and other prayers; then he said the canonical hours, paid a visit to the most Blessed Sacrament, and after that to the Blessed Virgin Mary; he then said the Rosary and Litanies, and he wished his servants also to recite the Rosary with uncovered heads. He said many prayers for the souls in purgatory besides; he passed the rest of the time till twelve in singing pious hymns, and in holy converse with Father Villani. He celebrated mass every day, and when the hour approached he made his preparations before going a step. While he continued his route he said Vespers and Compline; he then made a long meditation, together with a visit to Jesus and Mary, whose rosary he recited again. On arriving at the inn he said Matins and Lauds for the

following day. His attendants were humility and poverty. He wore nothing but the gown and cassock of his Congregation. He fasted in the morning, and took his evening meal in a strange manner, for he went to the same table as the drivers, as if he had been the poorest of the travellers. He experienced ineffable consolations during the three weeks he passed at Loretto in the holy chapel. He observed, or rather he meditated on the smallest local circumstances connected with it. "It is here," he exclaimed in unceasing rapture, "it is here that the Word became man, it is here that Mary held Him in her arms!" One day he told Father Villani to retire, wishing to contemplate the mysteries which this cradle of the divine humanity recalled to his mind at leisure. Though he remained incognito, many persons came to pay their respects to him. The Jesuit Father, penitentiary of this Church, loaded him with attention and consideration. He accompanied him continually, and let him see all the valuable things which are to be found in the treasury of this chapel. Alphonso felt extreme joy in hearing of the kings and princes who had given to the Blessed Virgin such costly testimonies of their piety.

During all the nights Alphonso passed at Loretto, he never went to bed; he remained constantly on his knees, sometimes without any support, sometimes with that of his bed. These details were given to me by Dominic Anthony Zannelli, who was his servant then, and had been witness of them, having watched his master

through the crevices of the door. The same Zannelli told me also that Alphonso took for supper only an infusion of sage; he ate very little at dinner, and when he was urged to take some dishes which the innkeeper brought for him, he always declined it adroitly. He never left the house to go to see the town, only going out to celebrate mass in the morning, and to pay a visit in the evening to the Blessed Sacrament and the holy Virgin Mary. The pilgrims who were not wanting there, came to the saintly man in crowds, and he neglected nothing in order to relieve their misery. One of them coming before him half naked, Alphonso opened his trunk and gave him his best shirt, and a tolerably large alms besides. When he was obliged to leave Loretto, one may say he left his heart behind in that holy spot. On his return he did not cease to speak of the great mystery the very scene of the accomplishment of which he had been visiting.

A heavy rain fell the night after his departure which swelled the stream of the river Tarni. The next morning in leaving Marino in a boat an awkward evolution nearly upset the barge; Alphonso fell into the water and disappeared in the middle of the river; but for the courage of the servant who accompanied him he would have been lost. He threw himself into the stream, had the happiness to bear him out of it on his shoulders, and miraculously succeeded in taking him to the other side. When they arrived at Spoleto, Mgr. Acqua, Bishop of

that city, being informed of the passage of his saintly colleague, sent his carriage to the hotel for him; he was himself confined to bed by gout, and was under great uneasiness as to the state of his diocese. He thought himself most fortunate in being able personally to know one whose works he admired so much. He opened his heart to him, told him all his trials, and amongst others, that though there were four hundred parishes and forty convents in his diocese, he had not enough priests. Alphonso consoled the holy Bishop by pious reflections, who passed the greater part of the night with him blessing God for having been able to converse with a man of such enlightened piety.

CHAPTER V.

Alphonso returned to Rome on the evening of May 8th, 1762; the Pope arrived almost at the same time from Civita Vecchia. Alphonso went to do homage to him immediately; as he bent to kiss his feet, the Pope hastened to raise him, and embracing him made him sit beside him; but Alphonso, who aspired only to show his inaptitude for the episcopate and his holy horror of dignities, threw himself anew at his feet and supplicated in tears to be exempted from a charge which his infirmities, his age, and above all, his incapacity rendered him unfit for. The Pope was affected, but could

not change his resolution. "Obedience," he said, "enables miracles to be wrought; trust therefore in God, and He will assist you." He then made him sit down, and questioned him with interest as to the state of Naples, both in its political and spiritual relations; he kept him for an hour and a half, as he took very great pleasure in talking to him. Alphonso did not omit to tell the holy Father of the great good his missionaries were doing, and how much God blessed our Congregation, which had merited the esteem of the King and Bishops. He then went to Cardinal Pallavicino, to Mgr. the Auditor, and Bishop Marefoschi, Secretary of the Examen; he visited also some other Cardinals and Prelates. When at the palace of Cardinal Torregiani, Secretary of State, he wished before making himself known, to wait till all who had asked an audience were satisfied, so he staid humbly in the antechamber. Bishop Molinari related, when he was dangerously ill at Biomi, that being then at Rome, as Postulator for the canonization of the Capuchin Fathers, he entered the anteroom that same day, where he saw Alphonso to whom no one paid any attention. "Do you know," said he, turning to the Cardinal's servants, "who this religious is? It is Don Alphonso Liguori, a Neapolitan nobleman, a man as learned as he is holy, and much celebrated by his writings in Italy and among other nations." He had been taken for a mendicant; the Cardinal was immediately informed however after this, and received him with distinction above every

one else. When he visited Cardinal Antonelli he came himself to receive him at the hall door. He conversed in a friendly way with him for more than two hours, and when he went away he reconducted him to the door.

The Pope was so charmed with Alphonso that he wished often to see him, and conferred with him on many affairs of much importance to the church. The Pope conceived the highest opinion of his virtues and science from these interviews. He never spoke of him without admiration, so much so that a rumour went about that Alphonso would be made a Cardinal; it was even spoken of at Naples, and Bishop Borgia from what he heard thought the news was certainly true. Alphonso himself seemed to confirm these reports by the terms in which he wrote to his brother Hercules of what had passed between him and the Sovereign Pontiff. In one of his visits to the holy Father the conversation fell upon frequent communion; Alphonso told him that he had been opposed at Naples on this subject by some men more rigorous than devout, who by exaggerating the dispositions which this Sacrament requires, discouraged the faithful and kept them at a distance from it. "What do these innovators mean?" replied the Pope, afflicted at this news. "I know by experience, how advantageous frequent communion is to the soul." He disapproved of the silence of Alphonso, and charged him to refute his adversaries. Alphonso consented, and during his stay in Rome he composed and published a treatise on this subject. The

Pope received it with great satisfaction. Alphonso presented it to a great number of Cardinals and Prelates, who all admired the superiority of his talent.

He went to visit the examiners, that is to say, Cardinal Gallo, Grand Penitentiary, and Father Ricchini, Master of the Sacred Palace, and Abbot of St. Peter ad Vircula: he received the greatest marks of esteem from them all. When he was asked on what treatises he wished to be examined, he wanted to leave it to the choice of the examiners; but as they insisted to the contrary, he named that de Mutuo to the Cardinal, and that de Legibus to the Abbé; but Father Ricchini, who knew how much he dreaded the episcopate, wished to propose a question which would please him, it was this: "Is it lawful to wish for the episcopate, An liceat appetere episcopatum?" He had touched a sensitive chord. The Father General smiled, but Alphonso, if he did not weep, showed the bitterness of his heart depicted on his countenance.

On the eve of the examination the thought of the burthen which threatened him brought on a sick head-ache, which took away all his rest. Father Villani was much concerned at it, knowing well that the evil would last a long time. Alphonso would not eat, and indeed was incapable of taking anything; however he took a little on the command of the said Father, and the next day, in spite of the discomfort he felt, he presented himself for the examina-

tion. The Cardinals Orsini and Antonelli led him into the ordinary hall, and seeing how much he suffered showed commiseration. Notwithstanding all this, the trial ended to the glory of Alphonso. Father Ricchini having asked him if it were lawful to desire the episcopate, he begged him to raise his voice a little, but Cardinal Gallo turning to the Pope said, "Holy Father, he does not hear, because he does not wish to hear." The Pope smiled, so did the examiners and persons present. At the end of the meeting one of the Cardinals suggested to Alphonso that he should return thanks to the Pope; but either he did not understand it, or feigned not to understand it, as the Cardinal repeated it the second time. "Most holy Father," said Alphonso, "since you have deigned to make me a bishop, pray God that I lose not my soul."

On St. Basil's day, the 14th of June, 1762, Alphonso was consecrated Bishop at the altar of the Saviour, in the Church of Minerva, by Cardinal Rossi, assisted by Bishop Macedonio and another, of whose name I am ignorant. It was an overwhelming day for our Saint. He confessed to his director afterwards that he had had two great battles in his life: the first when he left the world, and had to struggle against the tenderness of a father who clasped him tightly in his arms; the second when he was forced to be ordained bishop when at Rome. "For then," said he, "I was cast down by fear in thinking of the burthen I was loaded with

and the account I should have to give of it to God." Alphonso only considered the good of souls in the favours he asked from the holy Father: when some one said to him that if he wished to enjoy the privilege of wearing a cap at the altar he must obtain a brief: "Oh," he exclaimed, "what a thing it would be if I should spend money in order to contract a wicked debt towards Jesus Christ!" He could not imagine why or how Bishops sought this favour.

While he was at Rome, our Fathers, seeing what great harm might happen to the Congregation by his loss, united to entreat the Pope to grant to them, that, though a bishop, Alphonso might continue to be Superior and Rector Major of the Institute, and that a Vicar General should govern it in his name. This request was supported by Father Villani, to whom the Holy Father immediately replied with kindness, that his intention was to grant the prayer of the missionaries: "I wish," he added, "that this Congregation should go on and be well supplied with subjects, and I do not intend that it should suffer any harm from the elevation of its founder, for the great good it has effected in the Church and in the kingdom of Naples is a great consolation to me." Thus his Holiness, delighted with this proof of the attachment of children to their father, condescended to grant all their wishes, which helped in no small degree to alleviate the sorrow of Alphonso, who had believed himself cast out of the Congregation in punishment for his sins.

The holy Father desired the new Bishop to come to his private audience six or seven times; at his last visit, in bidding him farewell, he loaded him with kindness, and he seemed unable to separate from Alphonso, who on his side was never wearied in conversing with the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The Pope commended the Church and himself to Alphonso's prayers, who in turn begged him to remember him before God, and also the wants of his diocese. When he went away several Cardinals and Bishops accompanied him to the last ante-chamber, and Cardinal Antonelli, who had conceived an extreme veneration for him, went still further with him. The Pope gave him his bulls gratuitously, and Cardinal Antonelli, Secretary of the Consistory, freed the other expenses.

He returned to Frascati, to take leave of the Duke of Sora, who kept him to dinner; he accompanied him on foot into the street, and gave him his arm to help him to get into the carriage. He recommended himself and his family to the prayers of the Saint before he left, and not satisfied with embracing him, he also kissed his hand.

During all the time he staid in Rome Alphonso led the most edifying life; he never went out but from necessity, or to visit the sacred places. After his consecration he re-visited the tomb of the apostle St. Peter, and placed himself and those committed to his care under his protection. He also visited the basilicas of St. Mary Major, of St. John of Lateran, and of St. Paul

beyond the walls of Rome. He went to see the Vatican library, but it was only to see the collections of most sacred Christian antiquities. Cardinal Orsini invited him a second time, intending to give him a fete on the place Farneso, but Alphonso declined, excusing himself on the plea of his infirmities. He did not do thus with Don Sergius Sersale, who invited him to come to assist at the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, in the novice house of the Fathers of the Pious Schools; he went there with pleasure to see the honour which is paid in the capital of the Catholic world to so sacred a mystery, yet one so opposed by the unbelieving. He mortified himself at Rome as elsewhere. The great heat caused him to suffer much from his head; he was asked one day to take an ice which was offered to him, but he refused to accept it, and contented himself with a glass of lemonade, which is called fresh water in Rome, (aqua fresca.) He was always dressed as a missionary, and wore the rosary at his girdle, and a broad brimmed hat. A person of high rank could not help telling him how much he approved his conduct in this respect: "In not leaving off the habit of your order," he said to him, "you have given a most edifying example to Rome." The Pope himself did not cease to praise his virtues. Archbishop Mastrilli of Bethlehem, Clerk Regular and Theatin, who was present at his consecration, asserted that the holy Father said that day when speaking to several Cardinals of Alphonso: "On the death of Bishop Liguori we shall have to honour another

Saint in the Church." "The prelates and Cardinals," added Archbishop Mastrilli, "venerated him likewise as a Saint."

CHAPTER VI.

On the 21st of June, St. Louis Gonzaga's day, after celebrating mass at the altar of the Saint, in the church of the Gesù, Alphonso left Rome and set out towards Naples, passing by Mount Cassino. Two young noblemen, Andrew and Alexander Liguori, sons by the first marriage of Rachel Liguori, a relation of Alphonso, had begged him to take this route to give them the satisfaction of saluting him. Alphonso thought he ought to gratify them, but on condition that they should come to meet him at San Germano, as he did not wish to lose time by ascending Mount Cassino. He stopped at Ciprano to say mass; the clergy and gentlemen, when informed that Bishop Liguori would officiate in their town, hastened to pay their respects to him. They adorned the church magnificently, and decked the altar with silver candlesticks and other rich ornaments reserved for great solemnities. The church was crowded with people of all classes, and each one already acquainted with the new Bishop's renown for sanctity, wished to have the comfort of kissing his hand and receiving his blessing. Alphonso was less fortunate at San Germano; for either from

his letter not having been received in time, or from some misunderstanding about the day of meeting, the two young men did not descend Mount Cassino. Alphonso then took the straight road to the Benedictine monastery, Father Villani having preceded him to announce his arrival. At first he received no answer; after waiting some time he saw a lay-brother who told him that the strangers' quarter was occupied. The hospitality and kindness of the Fathers of Mount Cassino, even to strangers, is well known, but no doubt God permitted that Alphonso should meet with this refusal. On account of it he went to the inn where he arrived, as well as Father Villani, to pass the night on the ground, if the host in respect to his character had not given up his own bed to him. Alphonso was not annoyed at this unpleasantness. "Blessed be God," he said, "who has thus ordered it." It was not without difficulty that Father Villani persuaded him to accept the innkeeper's offer; his only cause of regret was from the disappointment his pious relatives would feel when they heard of this mistake.

The fourth day of his journey was still more unfortunate. The guide promised that he should arrive at a certain church in time to celebrate mass there, but he did not do so until two o'clock, so that Alphonso could not offer the holy sacrifice that day. He was extremely concerned at it, particularly as it was the feast of St. John the Baptist. He arrived at Capua the next morning; Bishop Capèce Galeato ex-

pected him to dine there. In this journey as in the preceding ones poverty was Alphonso's inseparable companion; though a Bishop, he sat at table with the voituriers, without suffering any distinction to be made. At Capua he had once more to resign himself to receive the civilities of a great number of distinguished persons, both ecclesiastical and secular.

He only arrived at Naples on the morning of the 25th of June. Our Father Ferrara and Don Hercules went to meet him at Aversa. His arrival in the capital was no sooner known than a great number of persons of the highest rank came to see him; they were full of respect for his virtues, and gloried in doing homage to him by kissing his hand. After he had rested a little he hastened to visit Mgr. the Nuncio and the Grand Almoner, who received him with marks of the highest esteem, and on their parts they did not fail to go to visit him. Bishop Sersale was then at Tomo, so they could not see each other this time. Alphonso also went to pay his respects to the regents of the young king. The Prince of St. Nicandra, tutor of the infant Don Ferdinand, was informed of his arrival, and hastened to go to meet him, and on leaving he accompanied him to the stairs. The reception which he received from the rest was not less courteous; they saw his pain, so they told him to have courage and trust to their protection. He visited the four ministers and commended himself most particularly to the Marquis of Marco. "I go into a diocese in a little disorder," Alphonso said to

him, "and each one will wish to justify his conduct. I pray God that they may all be able really to do so; but I entreat you to regard the honour of God and the welfare of souls." "Do not be distressed," the Marquis answered, "and if you require the King's support be assured you will obtain it."

He was invited to the royal table, and went there; but while he was in the ante-chamber he was not recognized at first by the two young chevaliers who were in office that week. The Canon Don Fabricius Martini, treasurer of Arrenzio, made it known that he was Bishop Liguori, and Alphonso became immediately an object of great veneration; he was even given a seat. Confused by these marks of attention, he gently complained to Mgr. Martini for having made him known. In the drives he took through the town he always told the coachman not to attempt precedence, but to give way on all occasions. At the gate of the Santo Spirito he met a prince's carriage which seemed disposed to go first. His coachman wished to dispute this advantage, but when Alphonso perceived it he ordered him to leave the passage to the prince, and reprimanded the man on his return, enjoining him to give place for the future, even to a groom.

The religious of the principal convents asked him to come to say mass in their churches; but Alphonso declined all these invitations, not wishing to prolong his stay in Naples uselessly. He gave this gratification to the nuns of St. Mary of Zizza at Portanova however, for they celebra-

ted there the transferred feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. He went to console his penitent Donna Maria Saveria Guevara, at Donnalvina, and together with her her numerous and worthy companions, who ardently longed to hear his salutary counsels. He went by the convent of St. Jerome also, where the sisters had asked for him. He went to the church of the Fathers of the Oratory, to celebrate mass on the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As soon as his brothers of the Congregation of the Doctors heard this they begged him to say it in their oratory. He also gratified his cousin Francis Cavaliere, who, with the concurrence of the Cardinal, wished him to give the Sacrament of Confirmation to one of his daughters in the chapel of his palace.

The heads of the clergy, the missionaries of the Propaganda, and those of the Congregation of the Conference of Pious Workmen established at St. George's, gave him striking proofs of their veneration. They looked on him as the Apostle of the kingdom, and the head of all the missionaries. The Fathers of the Congregation of the Conference wished to give lustre to their society by giving him the title of Brother. Alphonso was full of gratitude, and went himself to thank them; he profited by the opportunity to animate their zeal; he also told them if they would not be false to their ministry they must preach with the simplicity of the Apostles. A priest of Arienzo, who was then at Naples, went to visit him. He thought it meritorious to pre-

sent himself before his bishop like a Ganymede, with a worldly affectation of dress; he was perfumed and curled, and wore buckles on his feet which covered all his shoes. Alphonso felt pity in beholding such vanity of mind, and contented himself by saying to him with touching goodness, "My son, these are not the buckles of a priest, and this head-dress does not suit you at all; if you act thus, you who should be an example to the people, what then will men of the world do?" The poor priest was quite confused, and changed his conduct. This was as a prelude to the combats which Alphonso was going to engage in against the abuses of his diocese.

From Naples Alphonso went to Nocera on the 3rd of July, it was a Saturday; he visited Cardinal Sersale in passing the tower of the Annunziata. He received him with the tenderest proofs of friendship; his Eminence rejoiced to see him a bishop. "You are then caught," he said with a smile. "Obedience has so willed it," answered Alphonso. The Cardinal accompanied him to the stairs, and on seeing his equipage, said jestingly, "But so, you have taken the livery of a Cardinal!" "It was not I who ordered it," Alphonso replied, "it was the work of Don Hercules." It is true that Alphonso wished to have his livery of a dingy ash colour, but to his great regret Don Hercules had made it of crimson on a blue ground. Casting his eyes after that on his shoe buckles, the Cardinal said laughingly, "You must have bought these at Rome, and no doubt

they cost you a great deal!" They were little iron buckles, which had hardly cost a carline.

The Lords of Gargano de la Tour had requested him when at Naples to celebrate mass in their house on his way. When Alphonso arrived he found the chapel magnificently adorned; he officiated there, then accepted an invitation to dinner at which were assembled a great many noblemen and priests of the place.

He arrived at Nocera on a Saturday; he preached there according to custom in honour of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. When the people heard that Bishop Liguori would preach the sermon they hastened in crowds; on seeing the saintly bishop the whole audience melted into tears. He received visits from many noblemen, ecclesiastics, and laymen on the following day: every one was glad that he returned to Nocera in good health, although he had left it in ill health. Some told him that his consecration had exercised a happy influence on his body even. On that day he was visited amongst others by Bishop Volpi, and by Bishop Martinez of Avellino, on the next by Bishop Cappola of Castellamare, Bishop Borgia of Cava, and Bishop Giannini of Lettere. The latter had a tender love for Alphonso; he had been Grand Vicar to his uncle, Bishop Cavalieri of Troy. He made him a present of a very beautiful rochet and a handsome ring, which he had himself received on the day of his consecration from Bishop Cavalieri. The Father Abbé Letizzia ex-general of Monte Vergine, came also to see him, as well as several

Grand Vicars, religious, and gentlemen of the neighbourhood of Nocera.

After having taken some repose, he went to Salerno accompanied by Chevalier don Francis de Vicariis, our pensionary, in order to greet Bishop Sanchez. He visited the Jesuit Fathers there, who received him with so much cordiality that Alphonso could not refuse to accept an invitation to dine with them. In the evening he went to Bishop Borgia at Cava, and the following day he was obliged to celebrate the offices pontifically in the church of St. John, being solicited to do so by Bishop Borgia and the religious of this monastery, who were almost all his penitents. The seminary clerk, who performed the office of train-bearer, observed, on raising his pontifical robe, that his stockings were of coarse cloth, which was a new motive for his esteem and veneration. We, seeing the visits which would be paid to him, did not put him in his ordinary cell, but gave him two in another cloister, in order that he might sleep in the one, and receive in the other. One evening he was with our Fathers, and passed the cloister where was his old cell: "O my cell!" he exclaimed, "formerly thy sight consoled me, now it afflicts me." He was so overcome by regret that he could not banish tears from his eyes. On the morning of the 8th of this same July, after a tender farewell to his dear monastery at Nocera, he took leave of the missionaries and set out for Naples accompanied by Father Francis Margotta. "My brothers," he said when going

away, "do not forget me, I go into exile, far from my dear Congregation." He could say no more, for his emotion was extreme.

CHAPTER VII.

As it was during the burning heats of summer, and at that period when the weather frequently changes, the inhabitants of St. Agatha did not expect to enjoy the comfort of Alphonso's presence so soon. Any one else would have deferred the journey; the doctors of Nocera gave him this advice, and the inhabitants of St. Agatha thought it would be so; but Alphonso considered it the part of a good shepherd to give his life for his sheep, so that they might not be exposed to perish of hunger or to the ravages of wolves; so he braved the inconstancy of the season, and without thinking of himself, set out immediately to go and unite himself to his Church. They wished to dissuade him from this. "A Bishop," he answered, "ought not to think of his own life, but he should sacrifice himself for the souls which are entrusted to him." He could at least have stopped at Arienzo, and he was strongly advised to do so, on account of the comfortable house and more salubrious air he would have found there; but he wished to go to St. Agatha, as the place where God had fixed his abode. Being again at Naples, he remained there till the following Sunday, the 11th of

July, after which he and Father Francis Margotta in one carriage, and his brother Don Hercules and Father Angelus Majone in another, took the route to St. Agatha together. He arrived at Casoria, constantly tormented by anxieties of mind, and pre-occupied by numerous cares; he said mass in the collegiate church of St. Maur. The clergy and gentlemen all went to obtain his benediction. At Maddalona, he stopped to dine in the monastery of the Conventual Fathers. Father M. Mirabelli, who was then Provincial, paid him all possible testimonies of respect and veneration. The repast was splendid, there were not less than thirty guests. Bishop Albertini, being informed of his approach, went from Caserto to Maddalona, from whence he accompanied him to the boundaries of his diocese, together with other great personages of the same town. When they arrived at the celebrated bridge of the royal acqueduct, which separates the diocese of Caserto from that of St. Agatha, the Canon Jermieri said to the saintly prelate, "Behold your diocese, deign to give it your blessing." He wept, being affected at the sight of the crowd of people who filled the road and hastened in expectation of the benediction. No triumph in the memory of man had ever been seen to equal that of Alphonso when he entered the diocese of St. Agatha; all eyes admired the humility and openness which were depicted on his face, all mouths proclaimed that verily a Saint had come to govern the diocese. On arriving at the gate of Real-Valle, he was saluted

by a discharge of mortars and by brilliant fireworks. He perceived when before the parish church, that the street was long and that an immense crowd, who had hastened from the country, also desired to have the episcopal blessing; affected by this pious eagerness, he stopped in his journey, got out of the carriage and entered the church, where, after a short act of adoration of the blessed Sacrament, he comforted all the faithful by a simple and pathetic discourse. "I go," he said in conclusion, "but I will leave you my heart, and in a little I will send a mission, which will cause the abundance of the divine mercies to descend on you." In passing by Bagnoli, a fief of the episcopal revenue, he was again saluted by roars of cannon and by a thousand acclamations from a joyous people.

On his arrival at St. Agatha, it will be easy to imagine the reception he received from the inhabitants of this town in which he was come to reside. When he descended from the carriage into the court of the episcopal palace, he received the congratulations and homage of both the secular and regular clergy, and of a number of distinguished inhabitants of the town and diocese. After a moment of repose, when they were making ready to conduct him to the church in procession, the canons discovered that he had no cap or green hat. Not being able to do better, they took that which was placed on the tomb of the deceased Bishop Danza. After the blessed Sacrament had been exposed, Alphonso prostrated himself for a long time with his face on

the ground, which he deluged with his tears. The Cathedral was so crowded, that spacious as it was, a good many people were obliged to stay at the door. When they had chanted the Te Deum, the bishop descended from his throne, and placing himself on the right side of the altar, he comforted all present by a discourse in which his love and zeal were equally shown forth. All who assisted there shed tears of joy, and thanked God for having given them an angel for their pastor.

The Canon, Don Francis de Lucia, then seminarist, took care to take notes of the sentiments which the saintly preacher expressed on this occasion. He commenced by adoring with the people the dispensations of God, who, notwithstanding his inability, willed that he should be Bishop of St. Agatha; he protested that he had not come in the midst of them to give himself to pleasure, nor to lead an easy life, but to excite them all by the example of his labours and his toils to work for their salvation. He said that he was not come into the diocese to govern, but to make himself all things to all, and that if as shepherd he on his side endeavoured to supply his flock with safe pasturage, they as sheep ought in their turn to profit by his words and be docile, in order to escape from wolves. He addressed himself afterwards to the clergy, he prayed them almost with tears to aid him to carry his burthen worthily.

Such was pretty nearly the purport of Bishop Liguori's discourse, when he opened his heart

for the first time to the people of St. Agatha. Before he ended, he announced a general mission for the following Sunday which he himself would preach at the cathedral, as well as spiritual exercises for the clergy and nobles. After the benediction of the blessed Sacrament he received the promise of obedience from all the clergy, and retired to his palace.

During the sermon an accident happened, which at first was amusing, but ended by being serious. Alphonso was suddenly attacked by a very obstinate fit of coughing; one of the canons turned to the others, and said in joke, "Make ready, gentlemen, to elect a new Vicar-capitular, for if my Lord has another such attack, we shall infallibly lose him." Alphonso, to whom this proposition was repeated, and its author's name also, said jestingly in his turn, "He does not know that green pears fall more easily than ripe ones." A short time afterwards this priest, though in the prime of life, was carried off by death the first of all the chapter.

Such was the entrance of our Saint into the town of St. Agatha. The old people, who remembered the pomp of other bishops in similar circumstances, could not help admiring the poverty and humility of their new bishop: these virtues obtained for him, from the first, general respect and veneration. When the people came out of the church, they were heard to repeat with expressions of joy, "We have a saintly bishop, we have a saint among us."

Alphonso, after having shown the first fruits

of his zeal as soon as he arrived, gave them also a proof of his disinterestedness. The same day several of the most distinguished people sent him a quantity of provisions for his table of great price. There was an abundance of sweetmeats, foreign wines, of pastry, &c.; but he sent them all back, he gave money to the servants who had brought him these presents, expressed his gratitude for so much kindness, and, to the great edification of all the town, bought that same day at the market all that he required for his repast.

Some days after, the Provincial of the Dominican Fathers sent him a great quantity of choice dishes by the Father Prior of the Convent of St. Mary de Vico; but Alphonso refused all, and caused the Father Provincial to be told that he never accepted such presents from any one. The Fathers Conventual also wished to show him their friendly inclinations, by sending him a basket of little cheeses, with a quantity of sweetmeats, and small wax tapers. Alphonso took one of these cheeses and sent back all the rest. The religious of Frascio were not more fortunate, or the Father Master Eanti, Dominican of the Convent of Durazzano.

The holy prelate's secretary, Don Verzella, who did not know how far his master's frugality would go, and saw that he must have several distinguished guests at his table, such as Don Hercules and others, thought he ought to provide a suitable supper. Alphonso was dissatisfied and sent for him. "Don Fe-

lix," he said to him, "may God forgive you, what have you done? I am not come here to give sumptuous repasts; I do not wish to treat you harshly, but I cannot understand any excess. When there are so many poor who die of hunger, it does not befit us to make good cheer." Not satisfied with this reprimand, he sent for him again, and fixed the fare for each day: he desired that for his dinner, soup or boiled meat should be prepared; an extra dish was only to be had for his family or guests. Though raised to the episcopate, he did not change his manner of life; he even followed a severer rule. Before his departure from Nocera, he sent one of our lay-brothers to arrange the palace of St. Agatha, and charged him to carry the cover of his palliasse there, as he did not wish to have any other bed. The brother excused himself by saying that the canons had prevented it, and that they had not been able to procure suitable straw. "Let it be procured," said Alphonso, "and let it be bought at any price." He had the mattrass removed, and spread the empty cover of his palliasse on the boards of the bed, where he passed the night, and the next day he was not at rest till he had seen his palliasse arranged according to custom for the following night.

Mortification and humility followed him to St. Agatha. He went all over the palace, and chose the most inconvenient and plainest room for his own. He gave the best to his Grand Vicar, to his Secretary, and to Father Don Angelus Ma-

jone, who was to remain with him; he did not go to bed the first evening till he had disciplined himself severely for a long time. He wished thus to avert the anger of the divine justice from his people, and to implore for himself and his flock the mercies of the Lord.

When his arrival in the diocese became known, he received the visits and congratulations of a number of lords, bishops, and archbishops. Bishop Borgia, then Bishop of Aversa, Bishop Albertini of Caserto, Archbishop Paoti of Amalfi, came there in succession, as well as Don Innocent Pignatelli, and the Duchesses of Salandra, Bovino, and Cassano Serra, and many other prelates, lords, and ladies, who wished to receive the illustrious bishop's blessing. I cannot omit a circumstance which gained him the admiration of the inhabitants from the beginning. After visiting the garden, and finding it destitute of bees and vegetables, he sent for Brother Leonard, and ordered him to plant a number of kitchen plants, as if it were the month of February. The brother smiled at this order, and represented to him that it was not the proper season: "Do as I tell you," replied Alphonso. The brother obeyed, and every one laughed at it, but they were much surprised when a little afterwards they saw that all without exception throve wonderfully.

CHAPTER VIII.

Moved by what the Apostle said to Timothy, "that it behoveth a bishop to be blameless; moreover he must have a good testimony of them who are without;" * and also in his epistle to Titus, "that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us." † Alphonso continued in the episcopate that life of poverty and penance by which he had edified us so long. From the time of his arrival at St. Agatha, he made a rule of daily conduct which he continued to follow during the thirteen years in which he sanctified his church.

As soon as he arose he gave himself the discipline to blood each morning. After that he made half an hour's meditation on eternal truths, together with his whole household, with the exception of the Grand Vicar, who alone was at liberty not to assist at it. This exercise was never omitted. "Meditation," said the pious bishop, "is to the soul what the mind is to the body; he is not a man but a brute, who does not hasten on arising to pay homage to his Creator, and to ask of God the means of passing the day well." The canonical hours followed the meditation, and after a suitable preparation, his Lordship celebrat-

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* Oportet ergo episcopum irreprehensibilem esse; et testimonium habera bonum ab iis qui foris sunt. (1 Tim. iii. 2 and 7.

† Ut is qui exadverse est, vereatur, nihil habens malum dicere de nobis. (Tit. ii. 8.)

ed Mass; he then heard on his knees that which his secretary or some other priest said immediately after. One day when this mass was missed, Alphonso was much distressed, and complained of it to his Secretary: "Don Felix," he said to him, "the greatest annoyance you can give me is to deprive me of hearing a mass after I have said my own."

Having thus done his duty towards God, he gave audience to those who had to speak to him, and occupied himself most in satisfying the messengers who came from divers parts of his diocese; to spare them all the tedium of antechambers, he told his servants to usher in immediately every person, however poor; thus rich and indigent entered without distinction; it was noticed that the more poor and miserable the person was, the more interest Alphonso had in listening. The curés and vicars as well as confessors and foreign curates, had no need of being announced: he wished them to enter at all times with perfect confidence. "These are my privileged ones," said he, "they ought not to suffer any restraint."

When no one asked an audience of him, he began to compose or to dictate immediately after mass, which he never did when he had to attend to the people of his diocese. As soon as there was any one to hear, he directly left his study and did not return till he had satisfied the visitors.

The furniture of his room consisted of little more than a writing table; it was there he

placed himself in the morning, with a crucifix and figure of our Lady of Good Counsel before him, continually engaged in prayer, in work, and in giving audiences and attending to the affairs of his diocese. As his dislike to useless visits was known, no one went to him but for things worthy of notice, and if after having satisfied them they did not retire, "Now then," Alphonso said, "do not let us lose time," or, "recommend me to Jesus and Mary." If he had to do with people whom he could not with propriety dismiss, the constraint which he suffered interiorly was visible, not on account of the interruption of his work, but the loss of time, of which he was only avaricious for the glory of God and the good of his neighbour.

A stranger priest came to him one day; Alphonso did not see how he could shorten his visit with politeness, when he was told that a curé of his diocese wished to speak to him. "Come in, come in," he then exclaimed with animation. The stranger went out and left the curé with his bishop: "Oh!" said Alphonso, "these are the people I like to hear and not strangers, who come to converse with me about things with which I have nothing to do." Another time he was told that an archpriest wished to say a word to him: "Not one word, but a thousand," immediately answered Alphonso, putting down his pen.

Every one, except females, had free access to him; he desired to be informed if one of them asked to speak to him, and generally conversed

with them out of his own room, and always with a witness. A lady of rank and of a great age wished to speak to him alone: "There is no objection to this brother being present," his Lordship said to her; (it was brother Anthony) "he is prudent, depend upon it." Another day he was seen to give an audience in a drawing room to an old lady who was quite decrepit; the bishop made her sit down on a long bench, of which he occupied the opposite extremity and conversed with her thus, with his back half turned towards her. The witnesses of this scene could not help being amused at it, Archdeacon Robertis told me. When he had to reprimand some women of bad conduct, he wished always to have one belonging to him for a witness, and if this witness manifested a desire to retire Alphonso ordered him to remain. When he went to church, he wrapped his right hand in his hankerchief, and held the left in the opening of his cassock; if a woman presented herself to kiss his hand, he said, "Kiss the habit, that will suffice."

The habit which our saint had adopted of assisting at all the offices was not discontinued when he was a bishop; he liked to preside over all that was done in his cathedral at the high masses, vespers, and canonical hours; no indisposition stopped him; he was known to officiate pontifically when seized by fever; one day that he had applied a painful remedy to his legs, he resisted the advice of those who begged him not to officiate, and yet he suffered so much that he

was seen to tremble on his throne. He did all the offices of Holy Week himself; on Holy Saturday only, as he had not strength to remain so long standing, he made a canon preside at all the ceremonies and contented himself by saying mass.

His table, poor and frugal for himself, was a little less so for his family; that is to say, that besides that which he took, they had another dish of cheese and fruits. During the meal he took care to give food to the soul also; each one read in turn. It was generally from the Life of St. Charles Borromeo. The time which he passed at table and in recreation did not exceed an hour and a quarter. When the fruit was brought, he conversed with his Grand Vicar on the affairs of the diocese, or on some point of devotion. He received even then those who had not been able to speak to him in the morning, especially if they were poor or messengers, for it pained him to see his inferiors neglected and to try their patience.

After dinner he took some rest, which is so necessary in Italy. For his household he fixed an hour in winter and an hour and a half in summer; for himself, he was satisfied with twenty minutes or at most half an hour, and before it he never failed to say the Five Psalms in honour of the name of Mary, a devotion which he had practised from his youth before he entered the Congregation. He was so careful of his time, that he often studied instead of taking this repose. After he rose he took some coffee; but

very often when Brother Francis Anthony brought it to him, Alphonso was too much occupied to take it, and waited till afterwards when the coffee was quite cold.

He attached great importance to reading the Lives of the Saints: "The example of the Saints," said he, "encourages us and excites us to do good." When he became bishop he never omitted to employ half an hour each day in this exercise, as he had done in the Institute. He liked above all to read again the Lives of sainted Bishops who had been distinguished by their zeal and contempt of themselves, amongst others the Life of the Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs, of St. Francis of Sales, and of Bishop Cavalieri, his uncle, Bishop of Troy. At the end of this reading he made half an hour's meditation, after which he recited vespers and compline. He gave the rest of the day to business or to study. Even in the evening he did not go out, but continued his work without allowing himself any respite. On feast days, and especially in Lent, after vespers, he instructed the children himself and taught them the catechism. He knew how to attract them by giving them pictures and rosaries. But it was not little children alone who hastened to the instructions of the bishop; older persons attended in crowds, to learn from the lips of their first pastor the duties of a good Christian.

Our saint was too great a lover of mankind to neglect works of mercy; he charged himself with visiting the sick and abandoned poor, and

also those whose consciences were neglected; it was about five o'clock in the evening when he went to see them; he took care not to forget ecclesiastics who might be ill; it was an indispensable duty with him to go and comfort them in their infirmities.

At half-past five the bell rung for the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and he himself spoke to the people for half an hour, to inspire them with sentiments of faith and love towards Jesus in this Divine Mystery. This practice produced very great results; and Alphonso attached extreme weight to it. On his return from Rome, and before he entered his diocese, he wrote to Archdeacon Rainone to introduce the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and from the second day of his being at St. Agatha he never failed to make this exercise in the cathedral. It was observed from the first, that, though the sacristan placed a prie-dieu with a cushion for him, Alphonso knelt on the pavement near the altar, and continued to do the same. It was during this devotion that, wishing to banish profane and improper songs from the lips and hearts of women, he introduced hymns full of unction and piety; he gave the tone himself and repeated the verses in union with the people. The doctor, Cervo, told him that these songs weakened his chest: "I must make the people like these hymns," Alphonso replied, "to disgust them with dangerous songs."

When he had returned home, he gave audience and distributed his alms; he then said matins

and lauds, after which he made half an hour's meditation with the lay-brothers, and when this was ended, if it were in winter, he worked till nine or ten o'clock; but in summer he immediately united all his household, without excepting even the Grand Vicar, to say the rosary together, the litanies to the Blessed Virgin, and some other prayers. Then came the examination of conscience followed by acts of faith, hope, and charity. Those who happened to be in his house had to assist at these prayers; whether employed in the palace, a servant, a stranger, or even a prelate, all were obliged to perform this devotion; thus many times Bishops Borgia, and Pallante Mgr. Pignatelli, the Archbishop of Bari, and others knelt down humbly with Alphonso in the midst of his household. Bishop Mazza, of Castellamare, was with Alphonso one day, and did not assist at the evening prayer. Alphonso noticed it, and immediately sent to call him, and the Bishop was obliged to come and join in it. Even the princes and great lords who visited the Bishop of St. Agatha were not dispensed from it, and if they had shown disinclination, they would have distressed their host, who practised the same severity wherever he was. He was one day at Arienzo, where the examiners were gathered together for a meeting in order to fill up a vacant cure. The examination did not close till nearly ten o'clock; all were obliged to remain and be present at the night prayers; from their manner the bishop perceived that they felt it tiresome; he assumed an animated

tone and said to them, "I am older than you, yet I can remain on my knees, and your reverences, though younger, show that you lose patience; that would make me believe that you have not been in the habit of attending night prayers."

When these prayers ended, supper came, after which Alphonso conversed for a few minutes with his Grand Vicar and other members of the house on subjects which might concern the diocese; after this conversation every one retired, and Alphonso remained alone, and resumed his scientific occupations or was employed in prayer. His digestion did not suffer from it; for he ate so as to be able to recommence prayer or study immediately. Often in summer, when he was in a hurry for the printing of some work, he continued his labour until midnight. Father Don Fabius Buonapane assured me that he regularly employed sixteen hours each day in work and in prayer. This excess of application cost him very dear one day. It was at a time when he did not take supper and only took a glass of water before going to bed. His servant Alexis, who saw with regret the fatigue which such prolonged labours caused to his master, wished to correct it; so, this time, though midnight was already past, he brought the water, as he had been told. Alphonso drank it, for he had no idea it was so late; but what was his distress and confusion when he was afterwards told that it was past twelve. He had several watches brought, and compared them, but their agree-

ment quite discomposed him. For several days he never ceased to lament and complain of the mass he had lost.

Besides the Vicar and Brother Francis Anthony, Alphonso had a priest with him who filled the office of secretary, steward, and almoner; one house servant, a coachman, who acted at the same time as groom, and a cook. On his arrival he took two servants, on our advice and that of Bishop Borgia; but when he saw that the Grand Vicar arrived with a private servant, he obliged him to discharge him, saying that he would give up to him one of his own. However, at the end of five days one of the two servants of the Bishop went also, so that the only attendance for the Bishop and the Grand Vicar were reduced to one servant and the cook.

In the confusion in which he was when he left Rome, Alphonso took into his service persons whom his brother Hercules procured for him; but as he found they were not honest servants, he got rid of them on his arrival at Naples. "I have sent Don Anthony away," he wrote to Father Villani, "and the coachman is going also, for they do not suit me." Having heard that the cook had taken something from another servant he dismissed him too, and took another in his place.

His servants were obliged each day to assist at the mass of the Bishop and Grand Vicar, and to approach the Sacraments at least every fortnight, and on the principal feasts of our blessed Lord and the Holy Virgin. They were obliged

to communicate at the Bishop's mass. Every sort of game was forbidden to them, above all, games at cards where interest might be concerned. Public-houses were prohibited to them still more strictly. In a word, Alphonso wished his household to edify every one by irreproachable conduct. "One could read in the looks of all the servants," said the curé, Don Pascal Bartolino, "modesty, sweetness, and disinterestedness."

He had most at heart uprightness of character. Though indulgent for every other fault, if holy purity were in question, whoever the culpable one might be, he was dismissed on the spot. He thought he perceived that the cook had some attachment for a woman; not content with sending him away, he wished that he should live in another place; and as he paid no attention to his wishes, with the consent of the civil authorities he charged the constables of the town to arrest him; the chief of the police was bribed, received fifteen carlines from the cook and facilitated his escape. "I am very glad," his Lordship said on hearing it, "that the scandal has disappeared, and that the criminal has expiated a part of his fault by paying for it." He also dismissed another servant who went out during the night. He made a rule never to receive any servant who was not married and who had not his wife at St. Agatha. Alexis Pollio, his faithful servant, was a young man of irreproachable character; but Alphonso was not satisfied till he saw him married. It was thus our Saint watched over

his household, or rather his family, for he had the solicitude of a father for all who dwelt with him. He acted according to that which the apostle says, "He who knows not how to govern his own house, is not fit to rule the Church of God."* From the time of his entrance into the diocese he used every exertion to fulfil with exactitude every duty which this maxim includes.

CHAPTER IX.

Bishop Liguori found the diocese in a most lamentable condition on his arrival; it was like the sheet filled with unclean animals which Jesus Christ presented to the sight of His first apostle, and Alphonso, like St. Peter, was also invited to this mysterious repast.

On the Sunday which followed his entry into St. Agatha, Alphonso began to give spiritual exercises to all the clergy in a retired part of the church. Every one thought they saw in him an apostle. His style was simple and animated, and, like celestial dew, penetrated the heart; all the audience were obliged to yield to the ardour of his zeal, and loudly confessed their faults, and detested them with the confusion of sincere repentance. Scandals were repaired then,

* Si quis autem domui suæ præsse nescit, quomodo Ecclesiæ Dei diligentiam habebit? (1 Tim. iii. 5.)

and many sinners changed their mode of life, and their conduct became a consolation to Alphonso and an edification to the whole diocese.

On the evening of the same Sunday he opened a mission in the church for the people; he kept the principal sermon for himself, and committed the catechism to Father Margotta. In order to animate the people to all these exercises, Alphonso asked several able canons to go through the town before the sermon to give lively exhortations to the people. The high opinion which had been entertained of the new bishop, attracted such a concourse of people from all the neighbouring villages that the cathedral could not hold them.

Floods of tears were shed in the church. The bishop's life of poverty and mortification was as a signal of compunction, and the most hardened hearts were affected at the sight of the saintly old man, who struck himself with a thick cord to make a public act of penance for his people's sins. All have owned that in the memory of man St. Agatha had never had an example of such entire devotion. Grace triumphed over the most obstinate sinners. To give complete liberty to consciences, and to prevent sacrileges, all the priests of the town were forbidden to hear confessions; in their stead were summoned the best curés of the diocese, who were lodged in the episcopal palace. These wise dispositions, as the confessors acknowledged themselves, produced the most unhoped-for conversions. The good done by the mission was incalculable; there were reconciliations and wonderful acts of restitution made

then, and sinners who had been sunk in disorder for years embraced a new and exemplary course of life. An artisan amongst others, reflecting seriously on himself, received so keen a sense of sorrow for his sins, that after the sermon, and at the time when the discipline was used in common, struck himself with such a holy indignation, and wounded himself so much, that he died in a short period afterwards.

The exercises of the retreat were given separately to the gentlemen in the Church of the Carmelites; and these like the rest caused their saintly pastor to feel the joy he so much desired: they listened to his voice with attention, and by the general reform in their conduct showed that the seed of the Divine Word had not fallen into unfruitful ground. The conversion of James Rainone, brother of the archdeacon, and one of the first men of St. Agatha, was most remarkable, for he had led an irregular and scandalous life. Touched by divine grace he acknowledged his disorders, and detested them so publicly and so constantly, that he deserved to be placed at the head of a confraternity which was established among the nobles of the Church of the Carmel, on the occasion of this same mission. James Rainone, though quite young and robust, gave himself up with such ardour to acts of devotion, with which his desire of doing penance inspired him, that he survived his conversion only a few months. His death, which was that of a saint, was the consolation of his relatives, and the edification of the town.

At his sermon on the last judgment Alphonso put on a black stole, took a lighted torch in his hand, and said that he was going to curse usurers, blasphemers, and above all, impenitent concubines. A young gentleman was present, well known as an usurer at St. Agatha; he was so struck with terror when he heard the malediction fulminated, that he was seized with fever, and carried off in a few days.

On the following Sunday Alphonso had a general communion. He announced in the invitation he gave on the subject, that he had obtained a special brief from the Pope, granting a plenary indulgence to each person who would approach the Sacraments. So one may truly say that the communion was general. The holy bishop was full of joy at the sight of so numerous a crowd eager for the bread of life, of which many had been destitute for a great many years; he pronounced the acts of desire for the preparation and the thanksgiving himself; he did it in so touching a manner that all those present burst into tears, the rich as well as the poor, the clergy as well as the laity. There was a kiss of peace also in which they all took part. In short, the town of St. Agatha was sanctified: communions became frequent, the most Blessed Sacrament and the holy Virgin Mary, became the objects of great devotion, and every evening the Church was seen filled with fervent worshippers.

So much labour and penance in an old man already burthened with infirmities, filled every one with admiration. "We prayed God," ex-

claimed the Dean Buonanno, "to send us a good bishop, and God has heard us favourably, but my Lord will exhaust and kill himself." The treasurer Cacciapuoti, could not contain his wonder any longer; he said to the Grand Vicar, "What are you thinking of? do you not see that his Lordship is shortening his days? Have you forgotten the tears we shed, and how much it cost us to have him? Curb his zeal therefore: its excess will be fatal to him." And he advised him to speak to his confessor of the saintly bishop, to enjoin him to put bounds to his immoderate zeal. All such conversations, which were held everywhere to the same effect, affected the heart of him who was their object, for he was far from insensible to these proofs of a sincere love; but they did not cause him to alter his mode of life, and during the mission even an opportunity presented itself to him of persisting in his rigours towards himself. He had only two teeth, and whether from a chill after the sermon, or because God permitted it to be thus, to augment the merits of his servant, Alphonso felt such sharp pain in the middle of the mission, that it was impossible for him to take any rest. Many of the canons suggested to him to send for the celebrated Moretto of Naples, but he would not, and when they insisted on it, he answered, "Are not the dentists in this country as worthy as in Naples? Have we not the barber? Let him come, and let us be patient, for God wills that I should employ the people of my diocese." There was a barber at St. Mary de Vico, who was considered skilful in

these operations, but it was necessary to take care to call for him only in the morning, as his habits of drunkenness incapacitated him from work for the remainder of the day. They chose this time therefore, and when he arrived Alphonso seated himself on the ground on a cushion, and his secretary, Verzalla, advanced to hold his shoulders, but he took his crucifix from his neck and said, "What better support can I have than Him who suffered such pain for me?" Then he crossed his arms, pressed the crucifix to his breast, and bore the extraction without the smallest exclamation. Notwithstanding this state of suffering, he did not omit to preach in the morning to the clergy, and in the evening to the people. There remained one tooth, which far from being useful to him only served to incommode him; when the mission was terminated, he had that also extracted. This operation was extremely painful, for the tooth, which was still in a good state, adhered firmly to the jaw. The barber was obliged to re-commence three times before he could succeed in taking it out: Alphonso did not lose patience. "Oh," he exclaimed when all was done, "how firmly this tooth was fixed!" Then turning to the barber, he said gaily, "Master Nicodemus, henceforth you will have no more of my custom."

He had not yet celebrated pontifically at St. Agatha, though he had officiated in other churches on various feast days. He waited to do so in the cathedral until the Assumption, as it was under that title that the Blessed Virgin was the

patron of his church. The Pope, in order to enhance the majesty of these the first functions in the eyes of the people, granted a plenary indulgence to all who should, after having assisted at them, approach the Sacraments, or visit the cathedral this same day. This was announced on the evening before, and from morning till night the church was filled with the faithful. The holy Father granted the same indulgence to all those who during Alphonso's visitation of the diocese assisted at the pontifical mass, or visited the church in which he had officiated on the same day.

I cannot describe Alphonso's solicitude for his diocese from the moment he entered it, in a better way than by repeating that which Father Angelus Majone wrote in a letter addressed to Father Gaspar Cajone, Rector of Caposeli. "You wish to have tidings of our Father: know then that the acts of virtue which he makes his household perform are more numerous than those he practises himself;* there is no time to eat, to sleep, or to take breath. All is labour and fatigue, and then, after all, one knows not if he is satisfied. Every one admires his indomitable perseverance, and his extreme patience in listening to all who ask to speak to him and who have recourse to him, however poor and miserable the applicant may be: our good bishop's charity is

* In the sequel the reader will learn who Father Majone was, and will see the reason of these sentiments better than we could make him do here.

never discouraged, and he makes no difficulty in going to the church, in leaving the parlour, or in going to some other place to give to all entire satisfaction. He is indefatigable in preaching; he is equally zealous in reforming this diocese, which is in such disorder that he has neither rest nor peace. Sometimes he orders a person to come to speak to him in private, sometimes he writes to the curés to watch another person; at another time he gives a paternal correction; every one is enchanted with his gentleness and charity. He never accepts any present for the table; he has even sent back baskets of figs; he gives alms so liberally, that his income has not been sufficient for his expenses, and he has been on the point of getting rid of his carriage for the support of the poor, and would have done it had we not exerted all our efforts to dissuade him from it. You cannot think, my Father, how much poverty exists in this town and in all the diocese. When the news was spread that his Lordship gave alms, all the poor hastened in crowds from every quarter; petitions came to us in numbers, and each one exposed his wants in his own way. The theological canon told me that without his Lordship's perceiving it, the town and diocese have already changed their appearance since his government. This is all I can say without being too lengthy. Father Ferrara's letter will inform you of the rest." Alphonso himself was consoled at the happy success of his labours. "I am well," he wrote to our Fathers at Nocera, "and thanks be to God, our labours are fruitful." On the

other hand he wrote to Father Villani, "I am full of anxiety for my church, this spouse whom God has given me."

CHAPTER X.

If the taking well fortified places always demands several assaults and the effusion of much blood, it is equally difficult to triumph over hardened sinners grown old in the practice of evil, and whom obstinacy has rendered, as it were, impregnable. However great was the ardour of Bishop Liguori's zeal during the course of the mission and spiritual exercises to convert a canon of his cathedral, all his efforts were frustrated. This man belonged to one of the first families of St. Agatha, and for many years had grieved his Superiors and fellow-citizens by the most lamentable behaviour. It had been a question whether he should be divested of his office of dignity, but he was supported by the credit of his house; besides, the protection of one of his colleagues in the chapter, who was all powerful under the preceding bishop, seemed to promise him impunity. Alphonso tried to win him by kindness at first, and many times addressed remonstrances quite paternal to him. The criminal, who had not attended to the advice of Bishop Danza, whose brother as president of the royal council added still more to his personal influence, despised Alphonso much more, in whom

he only saw a little man whose humble exterior announced nothing but poverty, and who was bent down under the weight of years; he did not care the least therefore for the warnings which were given to him, and carried his contempt so far as to use most unbecoming expressions. Alphonso invited him several times to his table; nothing succeeded; at last he threw himself at this miserable being's feet; and taking a crucifix from his breast, he presented it to him and said with tears, "My son, if you will not do what I ask you in consideration of the character with which I am invested, do it for this Jesus Christ's sake who died on the cross for you and for me." The blinded sinner did not yield: equally indifferent to the name of God and to the entreaties of his bishop, he continued to live as he had done before. But before speaking of the severe methods employed by Alphonso to subdue this incorrigible sinner, let us hear the recital of another instance of irregularity not less grievous: the result was the same in both cases. There was a clerk at Majano who was provided with a benefice, who had led a deplorable life for several years; his church appeared to be in taverns and houses of debauchery. One may say that no crime was a stranger to Joseph de Lucas: this was the name of that miserable man. He had carried on the most criminal connexions for two years. Bishop Danza had caused him to be arrested and condemned to five years' banishment in the barony of Airola: but Lucas only became more insolent, so that his

very name inspired terror; Alphonso groaning over this unhappy being's state, sent for him several times to tell him how much his conduct distressed him; but it was vain. Besides that, the pious prelate made no difficulty in inviting him to his table, as Dominic Samberti assured me, who had met this wicked priest there; but this was trouble lost; the incorrigible man only became in consequence more haughty.

Alphonso, who wished to save these two erring souls, had recourse to the mediation of several good people, but with no better success. He wished to employ the canon's brother, but he found him so wanting in courage as to leave little hope of success.

Being compelled to recur to more rigorous measures, he sent for the canon and told him, that if he did not repair the scandal he gave he would crave the aid of the sovereign's arm against him. This menace, which ought to have intimidated the culprit, made him very angry, and he became in such a fury that he nearly used violence towards the bishop; but Alphonso without disquietude at it, said to him, "My dear canon, if you do not put an end to your irregularities, God will know how to compel you to do it."

All the mild measures which Alphonso used for the conversion of the beneficiary equally failed, or rather made him give way to still greater excesses. The unhappy mother of the woman whom he had seduced, complained bitterly of the scandal which resulted from it to her two

other daughters, and the wicked author of it was offended. One night, the 4th of August, 1762, while she slept with her daughters and two little children, he fired against the door of the house, killed the mother and wounded one of the little children. It was then that Alphonso, seeing no other resource, applied to the King; the regent, seized with horror, dispatched a strict order to the president of Montefusco to arrest the two criminals and place them in the prisons of that town. On the 18th of October, the canon was arrested by the police on the place St. Agatha. There was an extraordinary consternation in consequence. The criminals of the same sort feared to become the objects of similar pursuit; good people on the other hand were happy to see the scandal terminated; but all were amazed at Alphonso's zeal and apostolical courage.

The relations of the canon regretted his being taken to the prisons of Montefusco, and thought that the bishop could keep him in those of the officialty, so they used all their interest to concilate his clemency. But the royal orders were too precise to allow of it. Alphonso however, wishing to pacify them and to prevent further excesses, sought for some one to inform them of the impossibility of his satisfying their request; and as the secretary Verzala was too dejected to go himself, and besides did not wish to leave his Lordship alone, Alphonso hurried to call a chaplain from the cathedral, who, vested in his choir dress, came out of the sacristy at

the very moment. On seeing him the bishop said in a quick and animated way, "Take off these things....." At these words the priest fainted and fell at his feet. It was only by means of strong scents that he recovered consciousness, after which he was carried home more dead than alive. The bishop could not understand the cause of such terror; but the mystery was soon cleared up. This chaplain was also engaged in criminal courses, and on hearing these words, "Take off these things," he believed himself arrested like the canon, and he fainted from the shock. "The birds are taken with one blow," said Alphonso; "the finger of God is here; let us pray Him to finish that which He has begun." The chaplain was so frightened at the meeting, that he thought no more of the past, but only of an entire change of conduct. He led such an exemplary life from that time, that his Lordship after some years allowed him to hear confessions.

On the canon's arrival at Montefusco, the president wrote to Alphonso to put the prisoner at his disposal. The bishop wished at first to transfer him to the prisons at Benevento as the most secure, but his relations interceded, and obtained his re-entry into St. Agatha, on condition that they should place two guards at their own expense to prevent his escape. One day Alphonso sent for him: "My dear canon," he said to him, "it is not you that I punish, but your sin; I love your soul, and desire that it should not be lost. Remember then that you

have a soul, and remember that there is a God and a hell." He was obliged to take this tone in order to awaken one so hardened. Our saint had the consolation to see that the canon insensibly began to think seriously; he often sent him books of devotion, figures of our Blessed Saviour on the cross, and of the Blessed Virgin. After one year's imprisonment, the episcopal court condemned him to three years' seclusion with the conventual Fathers, and it was not till after a lapse of years that the canon was enabled to say mass again.

On the day after the imprisonment of the canon the priest James Joseph de Lucas was arrested at Majano. Alphonso, satisfied to see these two arrests so satisfactorily executed, wished, in order to impress still greater terror on others as culpable and to show the extent of his power, that it should be known that he was the author of the measure: "God be praised," he wrote to the curé of Majano, Don Thomas Aceto, "these two arrests have succeeded very well. Tell and proclaim everywhere that it was I and no one else who obtained these imprisonments from the King; I wish that they should know that it was I." Lucas, who was kept in the common prison of Nevano, wished to enjoy the privileges of ecclesiastics; but as he had never worn that dress Alphonso would not acknowledge the title. After a long imprisonment he was condemned to ten years' incarceration in the fortress of Ischia, from whence he was again transferred elsewhere.

Another priest of the diocese, who was also

living with improper connexions, hastened to break them off when he heard of the canon's fate and that of priest Lucas; it was the same with several others upon whom the fear of temporal punishment produced the most salutary effects. Alphonso's zeal did not manifest itself with less ardour with regard to the regular clergy. He sent for several whose conduct was improper to St. Agatha; it is almost impossible to believe all the gentle ways in which he tried to reclaim them, but if after the reprimand they did not amend he then adopted rigorous measures. There was a monastery in his diocese consisting of four religious, including the superior, who disgusted all reputable people by their scandalous behaviour. After being sent for by the bishop and admonished, they laughed at it, and did not reform themselves in the least. Alphonso then cited them before the episcopal court, and informed their provincial of it. He tried to defend his religious. "Your Reverence must send your subjects an order to go," replied Alphonso, "or I shall give them into the custody of the head of the police." This menace had its desired effect; two of the religious went off with the superior; as the third was less culpable, Alphonso was satisfied by his repentance. A religious of another monastery lived also a most disorderly life, but as he was not likely to be reformed by other means, an action was commenced against him, and he was turned out of the diocese. There were two lay-brothers in another monastery who lived in sin

also, the one passing his time in public-houses, and the other keeping up a most scandalous intercourse with a female consecrated to God. Preparations were making for their trial when they also were sent away.

There was a still more remarkable fact. For some time a monk had had connexion with a young woman. Alphonso, having lost all hope of reforming him, proceeded against him, and he was banished out of the diocese. The superiors of this religious sent him to the monastery of Montesarchio, but the miserable man returned very often to Arpoja. When the bishop was informed of it, he caused him to be arrested by the constables of the Prince of Riccia, and transported to the prisons of St. Agatha. He kept him shut up there for a long time, and, as the monastery took no further charge of it, he provided for his maintenance himself. After a long imprisonment he was banished again, and while Alphonso ruled the diocese he never re-appeared in it more. The woman was also arrested, and incarcerated in the prisons of the prince. Alphonso sent the curé and other priests to her to convert her, and the sinner was in reality converted and persevered. In the year 1767, the bishop being at Naples, made her enter the house of refuge at St. Raphael.

Our Saint's heart was grievously afflicted during his first mission. Among a number of reprobate women who gave themselves to Jesus Christ there was one named Elizabeth, who went so far as to ask pardon publicly in the church for the

scandal she had given. Although married she had lived for a number of years in adultery with one of the first gentlemen of the town. After this generous confession, and in spite of the holy dispositions she had manifested, she yielded to seduction again, which caused inexpressible sorrow to the pious bishop. He wept over it, and the next morning, before day-break, he sent for the gentleman, represented to him the seriousness of his sin, and exhorted him to penitence; the man, as proud as he was powerful, turned his back on him with disdain. The bishop seeing his misconduct still sent for him again, but the hardened offender was wearied of so many entreaties and reprimands, and answered by insults, even by menaces. The bishop was not offended at it, but as he saw that the scandal continued, he informed the King. The Marquis of Tanucci, minister of state, sent an urgent dispatch to the tribunal of Montefusco. A constable was sent to arrest the noble and the woman. His Lordship was then at Airola, where the messenger of justice stopped on his way. However the gentleman, whose passion had made him furious, had come to Airola also, accompanied by a troop of brigands, in order to ill-treat his bishop, and hasten his passage to the other world, as he said, which he would have done if another gentleman had not succeeded in persuading him to retrace his steps. When Alphonso heard of the danger he had been in, he said calmly, "He can assassinate me if he likes: well! he will give me the crown of martyrdom!" When the wretched man recovered from his rage, and saw that

he was the object of judicial pursuit, he was seized with such terror that he fled from the diocese and retired into a distant country.

The woman did not undergo a slighter chastisement. His Lordship was still at Airola, when she, with the consent of her lawful husband, came to beg for her own pardon and that of the gentleman. But she was arrested by the constable, bound, beaten with rods, and taken to Montefusco. This example inspired terror into all the women of bad character, not only of St. Agatha and Airola, but of all the diocese and its neighbourhood. The unfortunate woman suffered the rigours of justice for many months at Montefusco, and was afterwards banished for ever from the diocese of St. Agatha under very severe penalties. As for the gentleman, he consoled Alphonso afterwards as much by the sincerity of his repentance as he had grieved him at first. Alphonso, knowing that the woman was imprisoned, and the further continuance of the scandal had become impossible, was satisfied with the flight of the gentleman, and on the entreaties of his relations, and above all, of the archdeacon, ended all further pursuit of him, and when he heard afterwards that he was concealed in his house, he feigned to be ignorant of it in order to win him over the better, and he succeeded so well through the medium of persons in authority, that the gentleman acknowledged his faults, and flung himself at his Lordship's feet. From that time he edified all his fellow-citizens by his irreproachable conduct. Before his death, which happened some time after-

wards, he asked pardon with tears for all the scandals of his past life, which he had never ceased to deplore bitterly.

Another gentleman, who resided in the country in the neighbourhood of St. Agatha, had continued for nineteen years to live in a state of licentiousness no less lamentable. Alphonso had not failed to warn him as soon as he arrived in the diocese; but seeing that he could not reclaim him by mildness, he informed the sovereign of it twice. In consequence, the president of Montefusco received orders to summon the adulterous criminal before his tribunal, and the gentleman was imprisoned for several months at Montefusco: his accomplice suffered the rigours of the law at St. Agatha.

A gentleman of high rank also afflicted the inhabitants of St. Mary de Vico by the cynical effrontery of his life. He kept a young woman of Naples in his house under the very eyes of his wife. When Alphonso heard of this shameful excess he could not rest quiet. "I have heard to my great regret," he wrote to the curé Don Matthew Migliore, "of the scandal which the Neapolitan causes who lives in the house of N—; I beg you to let the gentleman know from me, that he must dismiss her at all inconvenience and immediately, otherwise I shall cause the woman to be sent away and himself cast into prison, to the shame of himself and his family." The gentleman, frightened at this tone of authority, hastened to dismiss the woman, and had no further connexion with her.

For many years a gentleman who was a libertine had lived in sin at Frasso. A zealous person, who was struck with his Lordship's success, which was the result of his influence at court, bethought himself of applying to him. As soon as the bishop was informed of it he wrote to the archpriest of the place: "I cannot understand how your Reverence can see such a scandal in your parish without informing me. I beg that you will send for N—— and let him know from me, that he must put an end to his irregularities and reconcile himself to God. I hope that he will yield to this paternal remonstrance; if he refuses, I shall be obliged to have recourse to the King, and to make him feel the rigours of justice. I weep over his sin, and above all, to the scandal it gives to others." This measure proved an effectual remedy; the gentleman began to think seriously, and from that time always led an exemplary life.

To all that I have related I will add a last example. On the arrival of his Lordship a young liberated galley-slave was living in crime at St. Agatha. He was at first reprimanded, but paid no attention to it. Alphonso had recourse to the magistrate, who ordered his arrest. He was seized in the house of his accomplice, and as he resisted he was killed on the spot. Alphonso wept over the loss of this soul; but to give libertines a spectacle as salutary as it was terrible, he ordered, in concert with the authorities, that his corpse should be placed on a mule between four lighted torches, and thus carried out of the

town and thrown into a ditch. The sentence was executed, and the body was thrown into the river, which was called at that spot the *Martorano*.

It was thus that, enlightened by the Spirit which especially directs the conduct of saintly pastors, Alphonso knew from the beginning how to oppose to each evil its particular remedy, and to use fire and sword according to need for the salvation of his flock. The blessing of the Lord which was granted to his zeal is the most glorious justification of his conduct. Nothing but a saintly bishop could have changed a field full of weeds into a flourishing vineyard.

CHAPTER XI.

Alphonso commenced his episcopal visitation in the town and surrounding country; some wished him to defer this visit until the end of the year. "Why defer that which can be corrected to-day," replied Alphonso, "until to-morrow? It is wrong to temporise with abuses." In order to obtain the blessing of God from the beginning, he had obtained a plenary indulgence from the Pope for all those who should visit the cathedral or parish church of the place on the first day. He convoked together the treasurer Cacciapuoti, a man as much to be praised for his virtues as his science, Father Caputo, a Dominican Master, the Theological Canon Don Evangelist Daddio, and

Archdeacon Francis Rainone, a man distinguished for his piety, prudence, and knowledge, as well as several curés with whom he consulted at once, in order to see what would be best suited to procure the good of the diocese.

The seminary was the principal end of this first visitation. Alphonso attached great importance to it. From the time he accepted the bishopric he intended to use all his exertions as soon as possible to make the establishment flourish. "It is on the seminary," said he, "that I found all my hopes of sanctifying the diocese. If that does not second me, all my trouble will be worthless." Alphonso found a great number of scholars in the seminary, but all was not according to his heart; many were full of intelligence, but of doubtful character; others had no abilities, and could only prove useless to the Church as well as to their families. "The Church and families," Alphonso said, "are interested in the advancement of young people; the Church gives them education, and their families bear the expenses; it is not right to abuse their upright intentions."

After having consulted the learned ecclesiastics before named, and studied the state of the masters and pupils with attention, he proceeded to a general examination, at which he assisted in person, and afterwards found an excuse for giving the vacation sooner than usual. When it was ended, he wrote to all the pupils to tell them that all those amongst them who wished to re-enter the seminary must address a request to him to

that effect. By this method he was able to make his choice and purify the house from all those who did not suit the severe rules he wished to establish. This decimation was painful to the relations of the rejected subjects, but they soon began to appreciate the wisdom of the bishop's measures, by seeing the misconduct of their children themselves, or their want of aptitude for learning and ecclesiastical practices.

But the reforms did not end here: the buildings of the seminary had more the appearance of a prison than a house of education; they were too much confined for the large number of young people they contained, and the want of air rendered them unhealthy. Every thing there was incommodious. In summer especially the want of a sufficient number of windows and the smallness of the rooms caused the heat to be stifling, and led to the multiplication of insects, so that residence there was insupportable. Alphonso was distressed at such serious inconveniences, and sent for two of the King's architects from Naples to repair the interior of the building, whose names were Don Peter and Don Saloador Cimafonte. He directed their labours himself: and fisrt he made them convert into rooms two closets which were annexed to the palace, and which Bishop Gaeta had destined to another use; he then made them break windows in various places to procure greater coolness, and others were shut, the openness of which might have proved an occasion of scandal to the young seminarists. While he thus enlarged the seminary, Alphonso con-

ceived the grand project of pulling down all the old buildings entirely and raising new instead. All the canons and gentlemen applauded these schemes. A plan was got ready, materials were procured, and without delay the work was begun. About two years after, when Alphonso was obliged to breathe the salubrious air of Arienzo, four rooms were finished, an apartment for the president, and several other parts of the building.

Little satisfied with the rules that had been followed for the government of the seminary, he established new ones, which in spite of the brevity of their wording were full of wisdom and prudence; besides that he fixed the nature and order of all the actions of the seminarists; he remedied abuses; he strove most to fix and order the functions of the prefects, and to make it a point of conscience with them to acquit themselves of them properly. He made it plain that the good or evil of a seminary depends less on the director than on the exact watchfulness and fidelity of the prefects. The rules which he established were seen to be so useful, that many bishops adopted them afterwards for their own seminaries.

It was necessary to have a new Superior for the seminary of St. Agatha. The treasurer, Don Lucas, who had been at the head of the establishment for upwards of thirty years, was more than an octogenarian. He was educated at the seminary of Aversa, in the time of Cardinal Caracciola, and had acquired there all necessary qualifications for the fulfilment of such a charge, but

his advanced age rendered him incapable at last. But in order not to hurt this venerable old man, to whom few years of life remained, he was confirmed in his post, and a coadjutor was given to him in the person of the Father Rector, brother Thomas Maria Caputo, a Dominican, as distinguished for his virtues as for his knowledge.

Alphonso spared nothing in order to choose good masters whose knowledge and conduct might serve as models. He abolished the custom of giving the office of prefect to a student, wishing that exemplary priests alone should have the charge. He established a general prefect to overlook all the rooms; he chose for porter a diligent man full of the fear of God. This last change was not an indifferent one in his sight. "If death," said he, "enters into us by the windows, it enters into seminaries by the doors." A porter went out one evening without leave from the president; Alphonso had him discharged immediately: the porter wept much and sought the intercession of several people, but he was obliged to go.

The autumn vacations were shortened, and replaced by relaxations, repasts, and innocent recreations, which the young people were to take in the seminary; and nothing was spared to avoid their being too much regretted. "A month's vacation," said Alphonso, "is enough to lose all that has been gained with much labour during the year; and which is replaced by sin and vice." He could not even bear that young people should go home to their parents

under any pretext whatsoever, if it were only for a few days.

He found the terms of the seminary were settled equitably, but he could not approve that when a pupil went away from infirmity or any other cause he was made to pay for the whole six months. He looked upon this as a manifest injustice, and wished that all time passed during such absences should be deducted from the amount of the pension. The members of the commission were ardently opposed to this measure, but the bishop insisted, and it was with difficulty he consented to the seminary's receiving payment for the month of vacation, as is done everywhere else. He did not wish any distinction in the provisions for the superiors; he called it a detestable abuse, and from his time this preference, which he considered a disorder, was never seen.

After having chosen the masters he regulated the studies. He forbade the dictation of lessons, and wished that printed books should be used. Two motives led him to adopt this course; first, the wish to take from the professor the possibility of setting up for scientific, and in the second place to husband the time and health of the pupils. He selected Honorius Tournely for dogmatic theology, and Fortunius of Brescia for philosophy. He reformed the morality studies most, which in his opinion were the most essential. "Morals and dogmatics, but principally morals," said he, "are the needful studies in a diocese; without them there cannot be good confessors or

excellent curés." He prohibited Italian poetry, Latin alone was permitted. He wished that they should be attached to what was solid, and that the young people should have a good knowledge of Latin. Before this Greek had also been taught in the seminary; but he did not think it necessary, as the students were mostly of the diocese, and destined to supply the numerous churches of the surrounding villages. "Greek is very good in the East," he said to the Superior, "but for us, who are in the West, Latin is what we want. My diocese requires good confessors, who may aid me in helping the souls of a number of country people; I have not to make learned men of those who often have not even knowledge of themselves." However, he allowed a slight acquaintance of it, sufficient for reading and understanding certain passages which occur in philosophical and theological authors. It had been the custom to receive young people into the seminary who returned home for their meals and to sleep. The thing appeared good, but Alphonso did not approve it. "Day scholars," he said, "serve as messengers for the seminarists, which is very dangerous to the conduct of both."

When bishops Borgia and Pallante went to St. Agatha and heard of these wise arrangements, they were full of admiration. "Know how to appreciate your bishop," said they to Father Caputo and to the professors, "for you have another Charles Borromeo."

Alphonso watched with the greatest care to

preserve religion, not only in the seminary, but in all the diocese, free from all errors of opinion. He heard that the young people, who came from Naples during the vacation, advanced propositions far from orthodox, on the authority of the Church, on faith and conduct; he sent for them immediately and reprimanded them. They answered that this doctrine was spread at Naples, and that one of the principal professors taught it from his chair. Alphonso enjoined them not to go to this school again, and to abstain from such propositions; he undeceived them at the same time, by showing them the sound doctrine. Not content with that, he wrote of it in very strong terms to Cardinal Sersale and to different zealous ecclesiastics. He also wrote to the professor himself, and represented to him the falsity of his opinions. He defended himself, and maintained that his doctrine was in conformity with the Church's teaching, adding that he must attribute to the wickedness of the young men the bad sense in which they had interpreted his words.

Don Pascal Deodatus, who came from Naples, taught several young men at Airola the treatise, de Jure et Officiis, of Abbé Genovese. As soon as the holy bishop heard of it, he prohibited the book to be read, principally on account of the proposition: "Patriam religionem servato, proque eâ pugnato?"* The curé, Don Pascal Deodatus, pretended to explain it in a lawful

* Preserve the religion of your country and fight for it.

sense. "It is not as you say," Alphonso wrote to him, "reflect on it, and you will see that there is not a word in this sentence which does not contain poison. How can one understand the word patriam in a good sense! Can one help adding these words to it, etsi falsa! Is not this blasphemy? Does it not follow from this maxim, that if any one were transported to China and acquired there the right of citizenship, he must become an idolator? Must he not be a Mahometan if he went to Constantinople? Thus, you either admit all religions indifferently, or you admit none. It is true that the author, through fear or some other motive I am ignorant of, changed the word patriam into Christianam in another edition; but that even discloses his bad faith; why Christianam and not Catholicam? Add again, etsi falsa, and we shall see ourselves once more in doubt as to what religion to profess. Shall it be that of Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, or England?" The Abbé was offended at this prohibition; but Alphonso persisted in it; he replied very strongly, and very nearly prohibited the reading of all these books in the diocese.

To inspire the young people with the love of study and the spirit of submission to their superiors, he was in the habit of being present at the lesson twice a week. He took pleasure in hearing the rehearsals, and took part in the discussions. He fixed that once a month a thesis should be maintained in the college chapel on philosophy or theology, and when confined

to bed by illness he wished the assemblage to take place in his room. In order to stimulate the students and masters still further, he invited some of the canons and regulars to these disputations, and if it were a philosophical question even some learned secular. He also established several public meetings for literature, which excited the emulation of the young students, who applied with greater pains to the study of Latin and rhetorical compositions.

As he had it much at heart that the seminarists of his diocese should learn to imitate in preaching the simple style of the apostles, and become good labourers of the gospel, he established an exercise for preaching once a week. Besides the young clerks destined soon to receive holy orders, he made some of the canons, chaplains, curés and other ecclesiastics assist at it also. His Lordship taught and explained the principles of rhetoric which he had himself arranged for the exercises of the missions. Each one was obliged to be ready to repeat some fragment of a sermon or some other short discourse. He could not bear studied expressions, still less far-fetched transpositions, or obscure phrases. "I wish," he often said, "I wish that the simple should be able to understand and derive fruit from the word of God." As long as he resided at St. Agatha these exercises were of very great utility, and if a simple way of preaching is now in force in the diocese, to the great advantage of the lower classes of people, it is through the indefatigable zeal of Bishop Liguori.

To encourage the young clergymen to apply with ardour to their studies, he admitted even deacons to the elections for benefices. We will name amongst many others, Don Angelus Stasi, who was afterwards theological canon, and Don Pascal, a Neopolitan, who were nominated before they became priests, the former to the parish of St. Angelus, In munculariis, and the latter to that of the bishopric.

Alphonso, solicitous to take away all cause of complaint from the seminarists, watched to see that they were all treated equally well, and that their food above all was prepared with the greatest cleanliness. "The little that is given," said he, "ought to be eaten with pleasure." They complained that the cook was not very skilful; Alphonso sent his own several times to instruct the one at the seminary. Often at the dinner hour he went to examine the cleanliness of the dishes, and above all, if the bread and wine were good. Once it happened that the bread was not of a good quality; a seminarist who was sure of Alphonso's nicety on this point, caused him to see it. The Superior was immediately sent for and reprimanded, as well as the housekeeper; the bishop convoked the members of the commission, blamed the quality of the bread before them, and ordered that all the bread in the seminary should be immediately given to the poor.

He showed such tenderness to the young people as to give them little feasts. When he officiated pontifically he was in the habit of giving each pupil a small tart or slice of cake, prepared by

his own cook; and besides this, at the fair of Salerno, he provided himself with sweetmeats for these family rejoicings. On Palm Sunday he regaled them with little cakes, and on particular occasions he gave them a treat by kindness and delicate marks of attention. He wished the clergy to be humble and respectful to every one, and he exacted in an equal degree that every one should respect them. A canon having received a slight offence from a seminarist so far forgot himself as to give him a blow. It is easy to imagine how much Alphonso grieved over it: "His parents confided him to me, and I ought to be in their place; it is I whom the injury concerns, and not the young man." He sent for the canon, whom he reprimanded, and inflicted a penance on him; on the other hand he punished the young seminarist with prudence.

CHAPTER XII.

The pains which our saintly bishop took were not confined to reforming the building of the seminary, and to giving more vigour to the studies. He endeavoured above all to cause morality to dwell there. He established half an hour's meditation in public on the great truths of religion, each morning after mass; he thought there was no practice more useful to young people. The Friday's meditation was on the passion of Jesus Christ; "He who is not startled by hell," said

Alphonso, "cannot help being affected at the consideration of a God dying on a cross." He also prescribed examination of conscience in common twice a day, in the morning before dinner, and in the evening before going to bed. This latter was followed by the recital of night prayers. During the morning and evening meals spiritual reading took place by his order; it was not practised before. At dinner a chapter in the New Testament was read first, or at least a portion, according to the will of the Superior, after which followed ecclesiastical history, or the Life of some Saint; at supper the reading of history was preceded by that of some book treating of the virtues and glories of the most Blessed Virgin; on Saturday evening the rules of the Seminary were obliged to be read. He fixed that the Blessed Sacrament should be kept constantly in the seminary chapel, and he ordered a visit there in common every day, as well as the visit to Mary and the recitation of the rosary. Every Saturday after Vespers several priests were appointed to hear the confessions. There was an obligation on all for confession, but not for communion. Each had to follow his confessor's advice for the reception of this latter sacrament.

Alphonso went to the seminary once a week before going to church, it was usually on Saturday; he assembled all the young people in the chapel, and gave them a practical sermon on the beauty of virtue and the deformity of vice. He recommended them to have above all great love and profound respect for the most Blessed

Sacrament, as well as a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he advised them to have recourse to her as to a mother in the temptations they might experience. He took other measures also to cause devotion to grow up in the students' hearts. He introduced the practice of novenas in honour of Jesus and Mary, with flowers of mortification for certain days, such as to forego something at table, and to eat kneeling or on the ground. He recommended the ordinary fast, or a fast of bread and water, on the vigils of the feast of the Blessed Virgin. He enhanced the value of fraternal love in the eyes of the students, and proposed a holy emulation to them instead of vain friendships taking rise in sympathy and a spirit of worldly rivalry. He exalted the advantages of poverty and mortification, leading the young people to fly all effeminacy, to love humility, and to obey their superiors implicitly.

He instituted a monthly retreat, during which the studies were suspended, as he wished that each one should give an account of his progress or remissness in virtue. There was a general communion on this day, which was preceded and followed by fervent exhortations from the superior; he preached a sermon himself in the course of the day. It was also an indispensable rule that every year before the recommencement of the studies, all should go through the spiritual exercises for eight days, directed by one of the Fathers of our Congregation, or by the missionary Don Gaetan Girolamo, who came from Naples with Brother

Don Ignatius or other holy labourers. Once it was Bishop Bergamo, at the time when he was only a curé in the parish of the advocate.

Alphonso thought too continuous application might hurt the young students, and wishing to give them some relaxation, he gave them the master of the chapel, Don Alexander Speranza, who was a virtuous and zealous ecclesiastic, to teach them chanting. He set the hymns he had composed to music, and liked to see them taught to the young people in relaxation time, and to hear them sing them at recreation. Very often he joined them himself, and was exceedingly pleased to see them joyous and contented.

In order to be admitted into the seminary, it was necessary to give certain proofs of exemplary conduct. It is difficult to believe all the plans he employed to be assured of this. He wished that on the score of birth no spot should tarnish the ecclesiastical dignity, he inquired if the subject frequented the Sacraments, if he assisted at mass in the morning and the visit in the evening. A young man was presented to him, whose brother and uncle were canons, he admitted him being assured of his good conduct; but after some days, he learned that he had been among the soldiers; without further inquiry he dismissed him from the seminary. He then sent for his brother the canon. "How is it," he said to him, "we are always together, you know the affection I bear you, and yet you betray me!" He excused himself saying that his brother had only been three days at Capua, and had

not put on the military uniform. Alphonso adhered to his first decision. The old uncle became ill from vexation. On Holy Saturday, the grand vicar, the governor, and the chapter even, went to pay their respects to his Lordship and to beg him to yield, but he did not; and when they represented the affliction of the old uncle, "Tell the canon," replied Alphonso, "to be of good courage, and that I will not fail to pray to God that He may grant him the re-establishment of his health."

When the seminary was thus regulated, all became edifying there; souls were seen there who were full of self-denial and always engaged in prayer. Although he had not fixed communion every fortnight, many approached the sacred altar every week, and others still more frequently. Charity dwelt amongst them, they studied diligently, and each one advanced in virtue and knowledge. The saintly bishop rejoiced at it, and was accustomed to call the seminary the apple of his eye, or the jewel of his diocese. Nothing seemed too much if it related to the young clergy, and he dedicated his time and labours to them willingly. "All my clergy are my crown," said he, "but I depend most on the seminary to cultivate and cause morality to reign throughout the diocese."

When report had published all these things, the seminary filled with excellent subjects; strangers gloried in sending their children to it; knowledge and virtue flourished in it; perfect impartiality maintained harmony between the su-

periors and pupils; young people preferred this seminary to every other; and as the seminary at Aversa had been celebrated in the time of Cardinal Caracciolo, that of St. Agatha acquired the same renown under Bishop Liguori.

Alphonso, jealously anxious to see this great work prosper, exerted himself as much as possible to preserve it from all seeds of corruption; he watched solicitously to prevent the introduction of romances or irreligious poems. He was not satisfied with having established secret inspectors, he had the rooms frequently visited besides. He spared no one: a very orderly young man was surprised in reading a Neopolitan poet; this was so great an offence in the bishop's eyes that he made him come down from the course of rhetoric into that of grammar, and he was obliged to remain there till a new course began. The bishop heard that some rather loose verses were circulated in the seminary; he immediately ordered the superior to search for them: and such great terror spread among the pupils, that he who had these verses swallowed them, not having time to get rid of them otherwise. Two seminarists were found in possession of forbidden knives; they were immediately dismissed, without hope of ever being admitted to holy orders. Three young seminarists committed an act of levity through the windows of the seminary towards a woman who had often to pass in the court; the very moment Alphonso was informed of it, he sent all three away, and was unrelenting notwithstanding

their submission and promises, and the entreaties of several respectable persons. After many years Alphonso admitted one of them to the sub-diaconate on the representations of the curé, who exposed the wants of his church, and made a protest as to the amendment of the candidate; but his Lordship thought he perceived other faults in him, though less considerable, so he left him always a sub-deacon. The second could never obtain this favour; the third, who had no more hope of re-entrance, died soon after his expulsion. Alphonso was on thorns when any hypocritical wolf disguised himself as a sheep. As soon as he detected it, he had no rest till he had unmasked and expelled him. He perceived a certain vice in the nephew of a reader; he dismissed him the same instant, without any regard to his uncle, who asked in tears for his forgiveness, and made all sorts of protestations, but in vain. When he saw the inflexibility of the bishop, he was so annoyed that he gave up his class and took leave of the seminary. When the bishop pronounced a sentence, the tears of parents and the intercessions of friends had no influence. "What charity, what charity," he reiterated to those who wished to prevail on him, "to pity one individual, and risk the ruin of all the rest? that is not charity, it is cruelty." Some people of note wished to interfere in behalf of some disgraced subjects, but they could not move Alphonso. Several gentlemen interceded uselessly for another young student whom he had dismissed; Count Cerreto also wished to

take him under his protection, but he had the same refusal, and received this answer: "A tainted sheep infects the whole fold."

Another young man of Airola interested in his favour all the priests and gentlemen of the town, but without success. Abbé Pignatelli, who was afterwards archbishop of Capua, begged our saint to try a young man who, he assured him, was reformed: "Well, if it is so, very Rev. Father," Alphonso replied, "he can enter the cloister." Only one example is known of a young man, who, after having fallen, found pardon from Alphonso. He was of the village of Ducento, and had not sinned against morality, but being wearied of study he ran away from the seminary twice. He did not deserve mercy, but Alphonso, in consideration of his belonging to Ducento, a country singularly abandoned, where there was not a single priest, thought he ought to exercise patience and gentleness.

Bishop Liguori, though inflexible towards the vicious, had a father's tenderness for those who were worthy of his care. One of these had maintained in a brilliant way several theses of theology; as he was poor, his Lordship gave him six ducats every half year. He deplored the neglect under which several small places groaned, such as Ducento, Bagnoli, Cancello, and others of the same sort, which had no priests belonging to them; when he noticed any young man of talent among the children of the inhabitants, he tried to persuade him to embrace the ecclesiastical state, and generously gave him an entrance into the

seminary. The canons who were members of the commission objected to this charity, which they disliked. "The seminarists," replied Alphonso, "were only instituted for the help of churches, and the pious persons who left their goods in favour of these establishments could have had no other intention than the good of the inhabitants of the diocese, and especially of the poor. The seminary ought to undertake the education of those who are without fortune, if by their conduct and talents they promise to become useful to their country."

It was thus that he procured excellent priests for many villages and country places, of which they had till then been destitute. In order to assist the poor scholars still more effectually, in his visit in 1704 he increased the revenues of the seminary and the endowment by six hundred ducats derived from part of the rents of the archpriest of Ducento, which was then only inhabited by a small number of husbandmen.

Alphonso, who took pleasure in seeing his seminary follow the course he had so wisely traced out for it, had not the same satisfaction as to the reform of the vacations. In the year 1764, the administrators of the seminary found themselves in debt from the expenses of building; they consulted as to the means of becoming free; in order to do this in part, they demanded that vacations should be given to the pupils; the bishop consented, but on condition that they should not be so long as formerly, and that they should not last more than a month, that is to

say, from the 1st of October until the 31st of the same month. He took the most prudent measures besides to prevent these days of relaxation being of any injury to the morality of the young people. Before dismissing them they were assembled together, and the bishop gave them a sermon on the perils to which they were going to be exposed, and the evil they might commit during their abode with their families. He prescribed expressly, that they should make half an hour's meditation every morning in their parish church in the presence of the curé, after which they were to hear mass; they had to visit the Blessed Sacrament every evening, and on feast-days to be present at all the offices as well as the instructions of the curé on Christian doctrine; they were to approach the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist every eight days without fail, and never to leave the house without the soutane, collar, and girdle. They were to converse with those who feared God and ecclesiastics; they were not on any account to be present at vintages, and still less at hunts.

In order to insure the maintenance of these rules he sent them to the curés of the young seminarists, and not satisfied with that, he knew how to have most circumspect spies in each place, and woe was to him of whom he received a bad report. No one was received at the opening of the classes who had not an attestation of good conduct, on the word of his curé; this certificate was indispensable; several pupils, for having committed very slight faults against the regulations,

experienced all the severity of Alphonso. A seminarist, who had received two of the minor orders, went to hear a comedy; that was reported, and although the young man had committed no other fault, he was not admitted for a long time after to the higher orders. Another went out at night by the aid of a priest, who furnished him with the means; the priest was immediately imprisoned, and the young man expelled from the seminary; the bishop was not moved by tears and solicitations, and though he eventually succeeded in being re-admitted, it was not for many years, and this required all the influence of Bishop Borgia, then Bishop of Aversa, and towards whom Alphonso bore the greatest veneration.

We cannot conclude this chapter better than by repeating some advice which St. Alphonso left to the seminarists, to aid them in sanctifying their studies.

"The Apostle St. Paul said of this world's wisdom: Scientia inflat, caritas verò ædificat: si quis autem se existimet scire aliquid, nondum cognovit quemamodum operteat eum scire. (1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.) Knowledge united to the love of God is most useful to us and to our neighbour, but if charity does not accompany it, it does us much harm by making us proud, and leading us to despise others; for the Lord is merciful to the humble, but severe to the proud."

"Happy is the man to whom God has given this wisdom of the Saints, which He bestowed on righteous Abel. Dedit illi scientiam sanctorum. (Sap. i. 10.) The Holy Spirit speaks of this as the great-

est of all gifts; how many we see who are puffed up because they understand mathematics, literature, languages, and antiquities! What does religion gain by their knowledge? What does it do for their own spiritual advancement? What do those numerous learned men gain from their knowledge, whose mind, though adorned with so many acquirements, knows not even how to love God so to practise virtue? The Lord refuses His lights to these sages of the world, who only labour to obtain self-renown, and He grants them to the simple: Abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revelasti ea parvulis. (Matth. ii. 15.) By babes are to be understood those who only seek to please God. Happy, says St. Augustine, is he who knows God, His greatness and His goodness, if he is ignorant of all besides. Felix qui Deum novit et alia nescit. For he who knows God cannot help loving Him; now he who loves is wiser than all the learned of the earth who have not this love. The ignorant arise, exclaimed the same doctor, and obtain the heavens: Surgunt indocti et rapiunt cœlum! How many ignorant people, how many poor villagers, sanctify themselves day by day and obtain eternal life, a single instant of which is preferable to the enjoyment of all the goods of the earth! St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: Non dijudicavi me scire aliquid inter vos nisi Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum. (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Happy are we if we acquire the knowledge of Jesus crucified, of the love He has shown us, and what He deserves from our hearts who died for us on the cross.

Verily in studying the book of the crucifix, we shall come to love Him with a love more than common."

"Father Vincent Caraffa, in writing to the young ecclesiastics who applied to study in order to save souls, addressed the following remarkable words to them: 'In order to effect great conversions, much prayer is worth more than much eloquence; for eternal truths make quite a different impression when they proceed from the heart, than when they are preached from the lips. For this reason ministers of the gospel ought to make their practice in conformity to their teaching; in a word, they ought to show that they are quite detached from the world and from themselves, and only occupied in procuring God's glory, and in making Him loved by all. Endeavour then,' continued the same Father, 'endeavour then with all your strength to acquire this divine love; when it reigns over a heart, it banishes all undue attachments; for it purifies it and cleanses it from all earthly affections.' 'Cor purum,' said St. Augustine, 'est cor vacuum ab omni cupiditate.' For, adds St. Bernard, he who loves forgets all to think only of loving. Qui amat amat, et aliud cupit nihil. Yes, a heart inflamed with the love of God, knows not how to attach itself to any creature."

"As then the students ought each year to give proofs of their progress in knowledge, so ought they, if they pretend to sanctity, to strive to advance in the love of God, not only each year

but each day. For this end they should be attentive to produce frequent acts of love, to offer all their actions to God, and to determine to do everything with a single view of pleasing Him; they should pray to the Lord incessantly to grant them His light and grace, to aid them to put in execution the good desires with which He will not fail to inspire them."

"St. Thomas of Villanova said, that to convert sinners and draw them out of the mire of vice requires arrows of fire; but how shall these darts of flame reach a heart all frozen and cold to divine love? Experience every day shows that a priest of moderate learning, but full of love to Jesus Christ, converts more souls than several learned orators put together, whose eloquent discourses charm whole populations. With fine thoughts, curious allusions, and ingenious reflections, it is easy to send away the auditors in admiration, but they also return cold in divine love, and perhaps colder than they were before. Of what use are such discourses to the people and the preacher? They only serve to render him vainer and more culpable towards the Divine Majesty. On the contrary, he who preaches Jesus Christ crucified in simplicity, not to gather praise, but to cause Him to be loved, descends from the pulpit laden with merits from all the good he has effected, or at least wished to effect in his audience."

CHAPTER XIII.

While Alphonso laboured for the reform of his seminary, he neglected nothing which could apply to the end of his visitation. Being informed of the disedifying conduct of several priests, he sent for them, made them a representation of their offences, and declared to them that he dared not tolerate sin, but that if they would amend, they would find in him an indulgent father, ready to forgive. He made some retire into monasteries, to take away occasions of vice from them; he was constrained to punish others by imprisonment, but the greater number yielded to his charitable remonstrances, and their after life consoled that heart which had been afflicted at their previous disorders.

The sacrifice of the altar and the sacrament of penance were the principal objects of his care during the visitation. He had an altar erected according to custom in the ante-chamber of the episcopal palace, and assembled the priests there for examination on the rubrics; he instructed the least capable himself, and confided several to the care of the master of ceremonies. He found a good number whom he was obliged to suspend, so grossly did they offend against the most essential rubrics; and he only reinstated them with difficulty and after many months' probation.

Behold what happened to one of these priests amongst the rest; he undertook to be a master, and thought he knew more than the rest. A young man recently promoted to the priesthood was examined, and Alphonso finding him quite incapable, could not help suspending him; he asked who had instructed him, and hearing that it was a priest named Dominic Oropalla, immediately sent for him and ordered him to repeat all the ceremonies of mass before him. Oh, what shame! The master, though a master, made still greater faults than his pupil; so he also was obliged to be suspended. It became a subject of jesting when it was known, that he who undertook to teach others had to be reproved himself.

Another priest, though noble, and the prefect of the College of the Annunziata, was obliged to pass through the same trial; he was found wanting, and suspended in consequence. As he was old, he lost courage, and had no hope of being able to learn the rubrics, so he preferred to remain without saying mass for the three years he survived, rather than submit to a new examination. The necessary rigour of these measures caused reflection everywhere; the rubrics were studied, and mass was celebrated with an admirable degree of precision and devotion.

Alphonso wished also to examine the confessors of the town and diocese; he had to grieve over them also. Though aware of the ignorance which generally prevailed, he did not think

it prudent to subject all to an exmination. "A mortifying word," said he, "which may pass from one to another, may cause the whole diocese to be without a confessor, and we should risk the loss of the good as well as the evil." He therefore only called those before his council who had been pointed out to him as relaxed or ignorant, and he questioned them, in order to know if he could continue their faculties to them. In the village of Cervino there were two found in the most complete ignorance; besides prohibiting them from hearing confessions, he forbade them even to say mass; some time after he permitted them to celebrate it, but he continued to refuse to let them sit in the sacred tribunal. He deplored the ignorance of so many incapable ministers, and still more the injury which resulted from it to the souls placed under them. He knew however how to soften the pain which these rigorous measures caused by his accustomed prudence and sweetness. This was not all. He even found several curés wanting in necessary knowledge; this afflicted him most deeply, for it was an evil to which he could not easily put a stop. In the town and suburbs alone he found four completely incapable. Not wishing to proceed against them, and injure their reputation, he appointed them canons, in order to prevent it, and to avoid the evil which might have resulted to those who would have been alarmed at severities exercised towards men whose functions had acquired their confidence; he did not omit in the meanwhile to warn them

and to give them good vicaries. One of them had deviated so far from rule, that his Lordship was obliged to propose his immediate resignation. The curé wished to resist, but he was forced to yield whether with a good or bad grace. After a scrupulous examination of the town and surrounding country, he commenced the following year to visit the other parts of the diocese, persuaded that if the cathedral and its dependancies were in such disorder, it must be still worse elsewhere. He went then to Durazzano and its neighbourhood after Easter; to Arienzo and then to Real-Valle and the villages of Bagnoli Ducento, Forchia, and Arpaja in the beginning of May, finishing with the estate of Frasso.

He showed the curés everywhere the obligation they were under of fulfilling all their duties properly, and represented to them what a strict account they would have to render of all to God. Above all, he rigorously exacted residence; and as several did not live in the presbytery, because it was in too bad a state, he ordered that all the priests' houses should be repaired without delay. He met with a good curé, well informed and of excellent character, who could not resolve to reside, pretending that his church was too isolated, and that his parishioners were few and scattered about; in consequence, he lived in the town. The most he did was to say mass on feast days. Alphonso was not able to tolerate such an abuse, and sent for the curé and enjoined his residence in his presbytery; as he resisted, he ordered him immediately to re-

sign. The curé was astonished at so rigorous a proceeding; he still wished to hesitate, but Alphonso said to him, "Decide, give in your resignation, or I will suspend you." Afterwards by mildness he was able to persuade him and to obtain all he had wished. From wishing to spare him, he obtained a dispensation from the Pope for him, to enable him to reap the fruits of his curé, which he had gathered so ill.

In a village parish he found such disorder that he forbade women, under pain of excommunication, to enter the curé's house further than the threshold, and forbade the curé under the same penalty to receive them in any other way, wishing they should only converse with them in church.

He also prohibited hermits who had their cells in some churches to have any communication with females. He saw that in the rural church of St. Michael, in the country of Real-Valle, there was a door in the interior which gave entrance into the cell of a hermit; he immediately prohibited women from all access to the hermitage under pain of excommunication, *ipso facto*, and he threatened the hermit with three months' imprisonment and the deprivation of his hermitage if he dared to introduce them there for the time to come. He did the same thing in regard to another hermit of the church of St. Mary of Sajano. In order that the hermits might not be able to enrich themselves by the alms of the faithful while neglecting the cares of their churches, he ordered those of Carmel and St. Anthony

under pain of deposition, to place all that was not necessary for their support in the hands of the canon Don Francis Cesare, to be employed for the benefit of the churches.

He heard that several curés through ignorance or disregard of the bull of Benedict XIV. did not celebrate for the people except on Sundays; he obliged them to do it also on feast days. He also saw that in several parishes the morning mass was not said on feast days, and still less that of midday, which prevented many of the faithful from assisting at the holy Sacrifice; he enjoined both to be said, above all, on days of obligation. He also observed some abuses in the dress of the ecclesiastics. Several wore curled hair and used perfumes; Alphonso blamed and prohibited such customs. He met with a priest who had obtained permission from Rome to wear a wig, nevertheless not without the bishop's approbation. Alphonso wished to see it, and not thinking it suitable, he sent for a vessel of boiling water, into which he plunged the wig, and thus straightened its curls. "This is how it ought to be," said he smiling, "and in no other way." There was a great deal of vanity in their clothes also. Some were ornamented with gold lace, ribbons, and laces; coloured mantles were also in fashion. Alphonso forbade them all under pain of suspension latæ sententiæ, and he prohibited their entrance into the church without the soutane. He allowed the canons alone to use coloured cloaks in travelling, provided they were of a quiet shape. He gave warnings, or inflicted

penances, according to the greater or less degree of offensiveness of the state of those he met with; by this method the rest were reprimanded indirectly and reformed themselves. The youngest especially were the objects of the strictest watchfulness.

Considering the great evil which the custom said to be from St. John brought to families, he strictly forbade priests to be godfathers at baptism or confirmation. However, he permitted though with regret that it might take place in baptism only in extraordinary cases.

As he found priests who were not ashamed to frequent theatres,* Alphonso stopped this abuse forcibly, and proscribed it under pain of suspension ipso facto a divinis and under other censures; he made a general rule that priests were not to play at any game of chance.

That which afflicted Alphonso most, was the precipitation with which some priests celebrated mass. To remedy this, he declared that whoever did so in less than a quarter of an hour, even in requiem masses, should incur suspension latæ sententiæ. He was informed of a priest who hurried through his mass in six minutes; he immediately suspended him and sent him to our house

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* We know that irreligion and immorality are very strictly banished from the theatres in Italy, and that they are therefore far from being able to be compared with ours; no piece can be represented at Rome which has not passed under ecclesiastical censorship. Besides, it is certain that what Alphonso deplored in his time as an abuse does not exist in our days in the capital of the Christian world.

at Nocera. "If he does not amend," he wrote to Father Villani, "I will never re-establish him, for then both he and I would be in a constant state of mortal sin." He suspended another at St. Agatha for the same fault. These means caused fear to arise in several, and from that time the holy mysteries were celebrated in quite a different manner. In order to show the enormity of such a disorder, he published his little book on Hurried Mass, with acts of preparation and thanksgiving. This treatise was spread throughout Italy, and there were few priests who did not profit by it.

On continuing his visitation he found serious disorders even in the ministers of the sanctuary. He had compassion on the weakness of the man, but he did not leave the sin unpunished. He sent several into the house of the mission of St. Vincent of Paul, and others were entrusted to our houses, with the certainty that the exercises of a retreat would prove an effectual remedy for them. He was not less careful to purge the monasteries from the presence of hurtful subjects. He was obliged to employ severity towards a religious who, forgetting her duties as the spouse of Jesus Christ, afflicted all the house by her continual irregularities. The woman was a Neapolitan. Alphonso sent her away, and had her conducted back to her home by several excellent priests; but she had scarcely left Frasso, before the impudent religious again presented herself at the convent door. The bishop on hearing that she acted with violence in order to enter it, and received the aid of her parents,

who accompanied her in so doing, went to the convent himself to prohibit her return.

Alphonso took every pains also in the reform of the people. From the beginning of the visitation he saw that a great number transgressed the commandment of paschal communion; he charged the curés to insist upon it to negligent Christians, and not to give rest to those who refused to amend. He sent for several, to warn them himself and to urge them to perform their duties; to others he sent warnings in writing. He was particularly interested about the salvation of the inhabitants of the country, but did not therefore at all neglect the labourers and dwellers in towns. It was a custom, or rather a general abuse, throughout the diocese, that after the ceremony of betrothment, the parents received the young aspirant to their daughter's hand into their house. Despairing of being able to prevent these dangerous meetings except by rigorous measures, he made it a reserved case, and alarmed the peasantry by threatening them with excommunication. He wrote in these terms on the 1st of September to the curé Don Anthony Tancredi: "The Archdeacon and I have found no other method than that of telling the fathers and mothers of the affianced that they shall be excommunicated if they permit their betrothed children to be together in the same house, and we have ordered the confessor to refuse absolution to those who offend in this matter."

He had also the sorrow of seeing that in the

diocese the catechising of children only took place in Lent. He ordered, under very severe penalties, that it should take place every Sunday and feast-day, as well as every day during Lent. In order to remedy the ignorance of the people in the elements of Christian doctrine, he recapitulated its most essential points, which he had printed in Italian, in one sheet for the convenience of the people; besides this he ordered that these instructions should be put on a tablet board, and should be read by the curés on every feast-day at the first mass, and at that where there were the most people. He exacted the same thing from all the priests attached to churches and chapels in the country. He prohibited confessors, under pain of suspension, from admitting any one to the sacrament of penance, in paschal times, who had not been examined by his curé on Christian Doctrine, and was not provided with his certificate.

He feared that the sacrament of baptism was not well administered in cases of danger, through the ignorance of the midwives; he did not rest till he had examined them himself; he did not fail to instruct them, and he continued to do it through the course of all his visitations. He reflected on the sacrileges which false shame causes to be committed in thinly peopled places, where sinners fear to present themselves at the feet of the priest whom they see familiarly every day; in consequence he advised the priests of such localities to change parishes mutually in paschal time.

When he found any of those unhappy beings whose scandalous life caused sorrow to their kind, he had recourse to the civil authority, who imprisoned them; he spared them the galleys, in consideration of the poverty of their families, and other sad consequences which would have resulted thence. He ordered all women of irregular lives to come to him, and in presence of the curé he put fire and water before them, I mean, he showed them on one hand his indignation, and on the other, his mercy. "If you reform," said he, "you will find in me a father full of charity; but if you remain obstinately in sin, I shall be to you a severe and importunate judge." He advised the curés to watch over them, and to inform him of their conduct. A great number of these repentant sinners only experienced acts of love on Alphonso's part, but the incorrigibles were the objects of his justice and his zeal.

There was a most immodest custom in the diocese of St. Agatha, as well as in some other parts of Italy, which long usage had in a manner authorized among the lower classes of women. Archbishop Puoti of Amalfi told Alphonso that he ought to abolish this custom. "Rem difficilem postulasti," Alphonso replied. He did all he could, however, to gain this end, but all his pains were useless; so difficult is it to extirpate a bad custom when it has taken root in practice, and is, as it were, consecrated by time.

The practice of paying a visit in the evening to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Most Holy Virgin, was unknown in the diocese. He estab-

lished it everywhere, and for the aid of the curés had printed suitable acts for this exercise, which were placed on tablets of a portable sort.

He noticed also that they were very ignorant as to the method of assisting the dying, and that sometimes long tirades in Latin, and demi-sermons were addressed to the poor peasants, to the great disgust of the sick people, who could not reap any good from it; he therefore published a practical little book on the subject, containing an easy and devout method, which he distributed to all the priests, and especially to the curés and vicars.

There was a sad neglect also in the outward part of the churches, especially in the villages and towns; all was in a bad state. The walls were dirty, and covered with a thick plaistering of dust; our vigilant bishop, who thought that it is difficult for people to pray where their sight is painfully affected by what they see, made them repair the furniture and whiten the walls of the churches. His watchfulness caused the deformities to disappear, and raised up that which threatened to fall; the roofings were better kept, which saved the building from damp; several edifices were destitute of frames and windows, these were soon provided; the paving was suitably replaced; the cleanliness of the courts left nothing to be desired. "The house of God," said he, "demands holiness and decency, and too much pains cannot be taken to put it in proper order." A cobweb in a church was the cause of a severe reprimand to the curés and sacristans.

He forbade statues and altars to be preserved which had become disfigured by time. "An image is useless," said Alphonso, "when it does not inspire devotion." At Frasso he wished to burn an old statue of the Blessed Virgin, which was black and shapeless, but the people opposed it; Alphonso yielded reluctantly to this ill-bestowed devotion. He had many broken altars restored, and pictures which had been injured by time. The rotten wood was given to the poor, and when all was repaired, they were obliged, in conformity to the strictness of his regulations, to dust every part of the church once a week, and to clean the holy-water stoups.

The holy oil was kept in no less distressing a state: in many churches he found it banished into a corner of the sacristy, or at best of the baptistery; he ordered that it should be placed in little closets on purpose for it. The small sepulchres that are exposed on Holy Thursday were also in a bad state; he wished that new ones should be made ornamented with taffety. He would have liked to have had several lights before the Blessed Sacrament, but on account of the poverty of the churches he was obliged to be contented with one. In one parish he found only a pitiful lamp on a window; he was indignant at this, and had it replaced by one of copper, which was suspended before the altar. In many places there was no canopy for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; he fixed the cost of these, and rejected all those which were unsuitable. He also noticed that the Holy Viaticum was followed

with too few lights, and he remedied this by no less explicit instructions.

He prohibited the use of unsuitable veils and humerals, and established the use of small canopies for the Viaticum. Many tabernacles were better arranged, and several, which had been lined with cotton, were by his order lined with silk. However, negligence in these restorations was general; and as they showed little anxiety in going to new expenses, he declared that wherever omissions and faults in these points were found, he should stop the revenues. He was rigorous also as to the form and material of the sacred vessels; he could not see the avaricious economy which had directed the manufacture of these things without sorrow. The churches had no re-monstrances; he ordered such to be procured, prohibited improper chalices or ciboriums to be continued in use, and ordered that, in two months, they should all be re-gilt. Many unsuitable chalices were obliged to be replaced, and ornaments capable of repair to be put into a good state; if magnificent ones were unattainable, it was necessary to use at least those which were fitting and decent. A great quantity of albs, chasubles, copes, and missals, were rejected, and great cleanliness in corporals and other linen for the altar was exacted.

Such was Alphonso's solicitude for sacred buildings and for all that could render the service of the Lord most dignified. One may say that the glory of the Lord consumed him with its holy flames, and rendered the words of King

David eminently applicable to him: * "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Bishop arrived at Airola on the 24th of July, 1762. He entered in triumph and was welcomed as a messenger from heaven. The Prince de la Riccia, who had the highest opinion of his sanctity, wished him to take up his abode in his palace, and ordered his steward to spare nothing to treat so distinguished a guest worthily. Alphonso opened a sort of mission in the church of the Annunziata, where he preached eight days following; he gave the spiritual exercises at the same time to the clergy in the Church of St. Charles. His preaching was efficacious, and followed by a complete reform. He was, however, obliged to suspend and banish two priests of bad conduct, as well as a deacon, but without judicial formalities; he enjoined them to submit readily if they would not incur the just condemnation which their crimes merited. He expelled three religious at the same time who scandalised the whole town by their conduct. The curé, Don Pascal Bartolini, has asserted, that being exasperated at the dissolute conduct of some laics, he sent for and imposed a paternal correction on them; but that having

* Zelus domus tua comedit me. Ps. lxviii.

found them incorrigible, he imprisoned them, and afterwards banished them by the aid of the Prince de la Riccia, who supported him strongly. A more severe chastisment befel a nobleman of the first rank, who was engaged in a criminal intercourse: Alphonso, however, succeeded in making him return home to his own wife; but this was only a feigned obedience, commanded by the fear with which the bishop's well-known severity inspired him. This nobleman, who was in no degree repentant, thought he could carry on his culpable intrigues with impunity; only he practised caution, and acted in secret. But he had a quarrel with his wife, and fearing lest she should go and denounce him to Alphonso, he threatened to take her life; now, a short time before, a libertine had really killed his wife. "If you do not keep silence," said he, "I will treat you in the same way as that man treated his wife." The bishop was informed of what had past; as he knew the violence of this nobleman's temper, he took a great interest in the fate of his unhappy wife; he immediately ordered the husband's arrest, and had him banished to Airola with the prince's aid; in spite of his banishment the gentleman continued to live in licentiousness, so the prince, at the instigation of the bishop, shut him up in a state prison, where he died in impenitence.

While Alphonso thus performed the visitation of his diocese, God proved him still further. His asthma tormented him again at Airola, and this torment was soon followed by a fever, accom-

panied by symptoms which appeared mortal. This event caused the greatest affliction to all the clergy and gentlemen of the town; as the evil did not leave him, it was proposed to him to send for some skilful doctor from Naples, "The doctors of Airola will suffice for me," he replied; "have they not studied in the same books as those at Naples? besides, my life is not of such great value." At the beginning the doctor Don John Baptist Truppi was called in, and during the whole course of his illness Alphonso would not be attended by any one but him and his son Don Jerome, and he would not allow any one to speak of calling in others. The state in which the bishop was did not prevent the continuation of the visitation; his place was supplied by the Grand Vicar, whom he told to go through the country, while he received accounts of the state of the faithful from the curés and several gentlemen. When he heard of any scandal, he did not rest till he had remedied it. He exhorted the curés and confessors to acquit themselves of their obligations well, and recommended the fear of God to them all, the frequentation of the sacraments, and hatred against sin. He asked his Grand Vicar to attend to the proper preservation of the churches very particularly, to examine into the conduct of ecclesiastics, to be sure that it was edifying, and in short, to exact a strict observance of discipline. During this malady he did not fail to communicate each day, to hear mass in his room, and to make his customary meditations in the morn-

ing and evening. All Airola admired the conduct of the holy bishop, whose example did not produce less fruit than his words.

On the ninth day, the malady got worse, and he asked if there were any danger. The physician Truppi did not conceal the truth from him; he knew the firmness of the saintly invalid's mind, so he frankly avowed the real state of the case. Alphonso then sent for his secretary, Verzella, and told him to administer extreme unction to him without loss of time. He received it with pious confidence, as may be easily believed; his face manifested the joy of his soul and his entire submission to the will of God; far from fearing death, he seemed to invite it as a friend, who would deliver him from his exile and lead him to his true country.

The visits which were paid him by persons of the highest rank and ecclesiastics of various degrees, were burthensome to him; if he did not expressly dismiss them, they were obliged to retire, for they always found him meditating or listening to the recital of some pious book, and this reading was not interrupted by the arrival of any one whatever. The doctor cautioned him not to fatigue himself by too much application: "It is that which relieves me," answered Alphonso; "without it my illness would be too painful to me." His health improved after the fifteenth day, but he was scarcely convalescent when he returned with ardour to the objects of his pastoral care. He was still in bed when he examined priests on the rubrics and made them

practise under his own eyes on an altar arranged in his room. He recommended them above all to celebrate with a gravity becoming the holy mysteries; he suspended four whom he found incapable, and put them under the instruction of the curé Don Joseph Truppi. He also examined several priests on moral theology. He was satisfied with the accounts which he received of the regular clergy, especially of the Fathers of St. Peter of Alcantara: he exhorted them to labour for the glory of Jesus Christ, and to serve as an example through their virtues. He established visits to the Blessed Virgin and to the most adorable Sacrament, and though scarcely recovered from his malady, he went to church himself to set the motives for the love of the Divine Saviour before the eyes of the faithful, and to animate them to labour for their salvation. He visited the nuns of St. Francis. He preached a sermon to them in choir on their duties, and commented on the rule of which they had made profession. He spoke to them amongst other things, as they have told me, on the love of Jesus Christ with all the ardour of a seraph; he showed them how we are obliged to love him, as well as the Holy Virgin, to whom he urged them to recur unceasingly.

Alphonso, in visiting his vine, cut and pruned all that was bad or uncultivated; but far from neglecting that which was good, he cultivated it with care, in order to make it produce fruit still more abundantly. In all the populous parishes he established the congregation of "Cases of Morals"

for the clergy, which had ceased from the time that Bishop Gaeta occupied the see of Capua. In order that the same case should be discussed on the same day by all the diocese, and that no priest should find an excuse for not being prepared for it, he made a choice of several questions himself, and every year he had the list of cases for each week printed in the calendar of the diocese. In order that each person should be well prepared before the arrival of the meetings, he wished the names of all the members to be put into a box, and that that of the one who should conduct the conference should be drawn by lot; when the drawing was over, the ticket was replaced in the box, for it was important that the same name should be exposed several times to the uncertainty of the ballot: "otherwise," said Alphonso, "he whose name came up once would close his reading in morals for a long time, certain that he would not be called for again before all the names were exhausted." He also wished that note should be made of all the decisions and conferences for future use. Even ceremonies of mass were not omitted; they were made the subject of special exercises, and each priest had to represent the holy mysteries in his turn, and to show in what manner he celebrated them.

Besides the reunion for the study of morals, he attached a school of morality to the cathedral, which had to assemble every week in his palace; he presided at the sittings himself. This academy was a sweet source of consolation to his Lordship, and the members of this assembly

were those he most frequently chose for curés. When he could not preside in person, he deputed some one of us to replace him who lived with him. Some of the academicians wanted needful books and had not the means of procuring them; he furnished all they required from his own library, and spared no expense to facilitate their labours. A great many of the clergy could not maintain themselves in the seminary for the same reason. Alphonso, who was anxious about their vocation, and wished to make them useful to the diocese, founded societies on purpose for their benefit. He instituted one at Airola under the management of the learned priest Pascal Bartolini. These clerks met together every eight days, when they began by making a quarter of an hour's meditation, and after followed an instructive sermon. They were obliged to wear long habits. Some amusements were allowed to them, but they could not join in some diversions which are allowed to seculars, such as the chase, &c. Besides frequenting the sacraments, they were obliged to assist at the offices of their parish on all feasts days, and could not be admitted to orders without a testimonial of approbation from their superior, Don Bartolini.

After all the experience of his life, our saint could not fail to institute a society of priests in his capital to give missions; the prefect he appointed for them was the dean Bartholomew Balzarano. The young clerks also took part in the labours of this Congregation, and every Sunday, each one, according to his

capacity, pronounced a short discourse of exhortation, or a fragment of a sermon. His Lordship thought this work most suitable for forming exemplary priests, and a very useful one to the people.

During the spiritual exercises which he gave at Durazzano, he noticed several ecclesiastics after his own heart, and excited their zeal and united them into a Congregation specially destined to labour in the rural parts of the diocese. They went to fulfil their duties in some place or other every eight days, and the priests and clerks of the place were obliged to assist at their exercises. These new missionaries distinguished themselves so much that Alphonso attached them to the Congregation known at Naples by the name of the Conference.

He did not forget the gentlemen during his visit; he gave them the spiritual exercises at Arienzo, which succeeded marvellously, and to strengthen them in good things, he instituted a confraternity in their favour in the church of St. Mary of Mount Carmel. He said, "The sin of the great is like the sin of Lucifer, who in his fall carried a third part of the angels after him; but on the other hand, if they edify by their exemplary conduct, they do an immensity of good." It appeared plain that God was with our saintly prelate, and that He inspired him when he spoke from the holy pulpit. One day in a sermon which he preached during these same exercises, in which he magnified the love of Jesus Christ for man, he suddenly fell into an

ecstacy, in which he appeared quite transfigured; his face beamed with so brilliant a light that the church became resplendent as from the rays of the sun.

The young did not escape his zeal. He instituted particular confraternities for them, where they might receive solid instruction, and learn to know the value of chastity, and the dangerous snares which surround it. He put them under the direction of priests of well-tried and exemplary character.

The confraternities for girls at Airola, Durazzano, and Frasso distinguished themselves most. He instituted special confraternities for young men, who also received instruction on their duties, and who mutually encouraged each other in goodness. Our Saint was greatly consoled at St. Agatha on the subject of the education of little girls. Two nuns, Sister Mary Columbo Fritto, and Sister Mary Antoinette Baretta, trained these children in virtue and taught them trades. The holy pastor examined this interesting flock himself, and he had the satisfaction to see that they were properly instructed in Christian Doctrine, and that they were made to frequent the Sacraments and recite the rosary in common. He insisted above all on the oldest among them being made to understand how great is the value of virginity, and how painful a burthen is the state of matrimony, in order that at a later time they should have a rule for their guidance, whether they embraced the married life, or consecrated themselves in celibacy.

He introduced the practice of prayer in common into the cathedral, as well as into the other parish churches; he magnified its utility, and wished that it should be made at the first mass, during which, for the aid of the people, a priest read at various intervals a chapter on the truths of eternity, or the enormity of sin, or on the mysteries of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. This pious exercise produced so much fruit at Durazzano, and it was so well appreciated, that after he had established it in the great church, the archpriest had it practised in the country churches, and in that of the Blessed Sacrament.

Alphonso also fixed a day each year for the general communion of men and women in every parish. He obtained a plenary indulgence for this day from the Pope, applicable either to the communicants or to the souls in purgatory, on the condition of visiting the church during the same day. He also wished for the liberty of consciences on this occasion, and that the confessions should not be made to the curés or confessors of the place, but to curés and priests from other places, who should be invited to come for this purpose.

After having thus terminated his visit to Airola, Alphonso returned to St. Agatha, and charged his grand vicar to finish the visitation of the diocese himself; as long as he was bishop he had made a rule of visiting it every two years, each year doing half, and he never failed in this. In this his first visitation of his dio-

cese, our Saint had many opportunities of noticing great ignorance among the country confessors in matters of moral theology; this discovery caused him keen sorrow. In order to remedy so great an evil, he summed up all the most essential things for the right administration of the sacrament of penance in one small volume, with all possible clearness and in the vernacular tongue. He named this book "The Guide to Country Confessors." This work was a worthy fruit of his zeal. See what judgment Father Albert Sacco, a celebrated Dominican, passed on it: "Verba ponderanda sunt, non numeranda.....paucis, verbis magnam massam hac in opella complexus est!"

The bishops testified their gratitude to the author, and this work spread speedily over all the kingdom.

CHAPTER XV.

Humility and charity, penance and disinterestedness were our Saint's inseparable companions during the visitation. Without adornment and without pomp in the members of his suite, all the equipage of the bishop of St. Agatha consisted, besides himself, of his grand vicar, of his secretary, and a canon of the cathedral, brother Francis Anthony, and a servant, who waited on them. For him there was neither coach nor carriage, nor horses with rich trappings; a wretch-

ed hired beast was all his train, and even the saddle he had borrowed from a lady of St. Agatha, named Emilia Vinaccia. The cavalcade was a remarkable one. His Lordship was beheld seated as women sit, on an ass, the bridle of which was held at one side by a child of ten or twelve years, the son of the owner. On the other was the father, who supported the bishop; it was a sight well worthy of admiration, and which caused all those who saw it to shed tears of compassion. As he never omitted any of his ordinary devotions in the morning, and let no poor person pass without consolation, he got on so slowly, that he was often on the road at mid-day, in the heat of the sun; the grand vicar sometimes excused himself from starting at the same time, and did not set out till towards evening.

At Frasso a person of distinction, who had prepared for his reception at his house, seeing him arrive on an ass, said to him in astonishment, "Why, my Lord, do you travel on an ass!" and his Lordship replied with a pleasant smile, "Hi in curribus et hi in equis, nos autem in nomine Domini."* On his way through Mighano to go to Arpaja, Don Francis de Marco, a gentleman of the place, offered him his carriage, but Alphonso declined it, and thanked him, saying, "I am so comfortable on this beast that it is wonderful;" and notwithstanding the urgency of the gentleman, he would not consent to accept his offer.

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* Some in carriages, and others on horses, but we in the name of the Lord.

He arrived at Arpaja about the middle of the day, and the canons exclaimed in their surprise at seeing such an equipage, "What! to travel in this heat, and on an ass!" Alphonso smiled, and a vendor of poultry happening to pass at the time with a great basket on his head, "Look at this poor man," said he, "which of us has come most easily, I on this ass, or he on foot and with this basket on his head?" One Sunday when he had to go from Arpaja to preach in the little village of Forchia, a canon covered the back of the ass with a red cloth. The bishop was dissatisfied with this decoration, but bore it for fear of paining the canon. Here is another trait which will give a still more just idea of his magnificent train. When he went from Arpaja to Airola, he could not procure enough beasts for all his followers; not wishing to incommode any one, he set out on foot, accompanied by his servant Alexis only. It was during the heat of the month of August; he had pity on the poor young man, who was bathed in perspiration: "My son," said he, "it is exceedingly hot, take off your waistcoat, and give it to me to hold." The servant would not consent, but Alphonso gave such persuasive reasons for it, that he was induced to give him the waistcoat, that is to say, Alphonso had no difficulty in waiting on his servant: he very nearly went half the way on foot, and he would have done it if he had not been overcome and quite exhausted by fatigue. On the way he observed the rule which he had fixed for journeys, during which he was constantly engaged in

saying the rosary with those who accompanied him, as well as the litanies of the most Holy Virgin, and other prayers in honour of his patron and of the saintly protectors of the divers places through which he passed.

During the time of the visitation he was so full of charity for his flock and of zeal for God's glory, that he braved every kind of inconvenience. Once in going from Durazzano to Frasso, he was indisposed, and therefore made use of a conveyance, but this was rather to please the grand vicar than from wishing it himself. The coachman, whether through awkwardness or drunkenness, upset them twice; the second time Alphonso fell on the vicar and put out his wrist; he showed no sign of dissatisfaction, and though in great pain he finished his journey on a mule. The news of this accident spread, and as he passed near St. Agatha the canons and gentlemen wished to get him to stop and take rest in the town, but his zeal carried him on, and he would not fail in what he had resolved. He was to commence the pastoral visitation at Frasso the same evening. When he travelled through the country called the Steps, a rich merchant, named Angelus Cervo, who was much devoted to him, being affected at seeing him suffer, forced him to alight at his house, and it was there that a doctor set his wrist.

This accident, which was an evil for Alphonso, caused a happy meeting for the merchant. He had a son in the house who was ill and given up by the physicians; when the bishop saw the affliction that this misfortune caused to the

family, he went to see the dying boy, though in suffering himself. On approaching him he made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and then turning to his father and mother said to them, "Be of good courage, and be assured that your son will recover." Indeed, at the same moment the child began to get better, and three days afterwards he was walking about. Don Cervo begged the man of God to remain at least the evening with him, but Alphonso only thinking of the visitation would continue his journey immediately. On arriving at Frasso he went to the parsonage, and as if nothing had befallen him opened the visitation, preached, and was as cheerful as usual.

Wherever he went he chose the poorest places: we said that at Airola the Prince of Riccia put his palace at the bishop's service; Alphonso accepted this in order not to disoblige a nobleman who had so powerfully protected him. His steward had prepared a magnificient bed for him in the room which the prince was in the habit of occupying himself; when his Lordship saw this apartment he praised it highly, but examining afterwards the rooms prepared for his grand vicar, and that destined for his valet, he gave the preference to the latter, because it was little and incommodious: "I shall be best off here," said he, "for I suffer from my chest; large rooms where there is too much air are hurtful to me." So he gave up the chamber and bed which had been richly adorned for himself to his vicar, and the steward had much trouble in getting him to

allow a rather more decent looking bed to be made up in the room he had chosen. He only consented on condition, that in case he returned at other times the same little room should be always prepared for him in the same manner. It was there he became ill, as we have said; but notwithstanding all the entreaties of the canon, and still more of the steward, who had the prince's honour at heart, Alphonso never could consent to leave his little chamber or to use another bed. "If you wish my comfort and relief," said he, "it is here I find it."

He could not understand any belonging to him complaining or being dissatisfied, and he gave a good proof of the pain he felt at it while he was at Frasso. Convenient apartments had been prepared for him and for his grand vicar; the latter, the day after his arrival, disturbed every one on account of his room, pretending that it was damp, and that the window did not shut quite close; he quarreled with the canons, and they did not know what room to give him. Some believed that neither the damp nor the window were the cause of his discontent, since it was the mouth of July, but rather the circumstance that the two rooms given to his Lordship had some ornaments on the ceiling and wainscot which his had not. The bishop perceived the perplexity and said, "It is nothing, I know how to remedy it." When the vicar had gone to church, his Lordship had his own bed, which was the plainest, moved into the vicar's room, and that of the vicar into his, who on his return

seemed not to notice any change. His conduct caused surprise, but the bishop's humility and thorough indifference were admired all the more.

In proportion to his joy at being treated poorly was his sorrow at being made an object of any distinction. The Dominican fathers at Durazzano served him with damask table linen. Alphonso was confused at it, and would not use it. He said, "Father Prior, this can be kept for other occasions, and ordinary cloths used to-day." "But," said the prior, "if it is not used for your Lordship, for whom else will it do?"

At Real-Valle God manifested how agreeable His servant's humility was to him: the room which he inhabited in the house of Don Anthony di Martino, had been infested for a great many years with beetles, and no means of getting rid of them could be found. The Saint passed a night there, and it was entirely freed.

On arriving in a place he went first to the principal church, where he opened the visitation by a discourse to the people, and announced the plenary indulgence to all who after having confessed should communicate and visit this church during the visitation. When the day after his arrival was a Sunday or feast day, he officiated pontifically if the parish were populous enough. If the church were not a collegiate one, he sent at his own cost for seven canons from his cathedral, or from the nearest college, and also for the seminarists of the place. He preached during all the course of the visitation. The second day after his arrival he commenced

the mission in the afternoon, which lasted for eight days following; the people did not leave the church till nearly seven o'clock in the evening. He visited the blessed Sacrament every evening with the people, which was in itself another sermon. He recapitulated the motives for the love of Jesus Christ and hatred of sin. Compunction became general, and all his words bore fruit. At the first sound of the bell every one hastened to the church, "to hear," as they said, "the Saint who smoothed their way to heaven." He also gave a retreat to the clergy every morning during these eight days as well as to the convents which were in the town.

He assembled children after vespers for catechism. He attached much importance to this, being anxious to see what instruction they received himself. He excited the curés to perform this duty well, and made fathers and mothers sensible of its necessity. He administered confirmation in the morning and evening of festivals. He told the curés to prepare the children for the proper reception of this sacrament, and he instructed the children particularly himself. He caused adults to go to confession, and only gave the holy chrism to children who were present in the church from the first imposition of hands. When he had finished this part, he waited till the others were assembled together, and then he recommenced the imposition. He was very scrupulous on this point, and he exhorted the curés never to present any child to

him who had not been present at the imposition. If however any one amongst them came to the church too late, he did not put him off till another year, but administered the sacrament in his private chapel.

He wished the children to be at least from seven to eight years of age, in order that they might be able to remember the reception of the sacrament. At Durazzo a child was presented to him clothed in a religious habit, on account of a vow made by his mother: he was the curé's nephew, but as he was only five years old, the bishop would not confirm him. His mother was advised to take off the habit he first appeared in, and to put him on a wig; when Alphonso saw him, he smiled and said, "There is the little monk again." He yielded however to the reiterated entreaties of the curé and his family, who, fearing that his Lordship would soon die, felt it a satisfaction to have their child confirmed by him. He did not allow any priest, and much less any religious, to stand as god-father. He refused Don Bartholomew Bartolini of Airola, who asked to be god-father to his two young brothers. He was very strict on this head, and did not permit it even to those of his own house: "I know not if this St. John has not done more evil than good," said he. "The end of god-fathers is to supply the place of fathers, but how can he who leads the life of an Egyptian and has no fixed abode fulfil this office?"

When he knew of any young people who were

infirm, and doubted if they had received this divine Sacrament, he did not fail to inquire into it from the curé or the parents. He learnt that a young invalid of Airola had not been confirmed; he went to him immediately, and made a most joyous prediction on seeing him: "My dear Pascal," he said, "be very glad, for in three days you will go to Paradise." The third day arrived, and the state of the sick person seemed far from that of a speedy death, for he seemed better; however towards the close of the day, the symptoms of fever became more alarming, and before night young Pascal was dead, as Alphonso had foretold.

He was most exact during his pastoral visitation, in inquiring minutely from each priest about the conduct of his colleagues, and not satisfied with one inquiry, if he felt any doubt, he wished to be enlightened about it two or three times. He remonstrated with charity, but in time of need he could menace also; when any want of edification had happened which concerned the public, he recurred immediately to severe measures, such as the cloister or the spiritual exercises. When he met with good priests, though but little instructed in the rubrics, he put them under the direction of some more competent priest. The regulars caused him less uneasiness than the secular clergy: as soon as he heard that there was any disorder in a convent, he directly went to the local superiors, and if he could obtain nothing from them, couriers were soon dispatched to the provincials.

He inquired about the regular from the secular priests, and the religious, whose sincerity he could depend on, informed him in turn as to the conduct of the secular clergy. No one could escape his vigilance.

When the testimony of ecclesiastics did not satisfy him, he had recourse to lay-men. He sent for persons who had most character for probity, and interrogated them about the scandals which might have afflicted the country, on the disorders which existed among the priests and laity, or on any other thing contrary to morality. He asked them if they knew of private quarrels or hatred between the heads of families, and he took the most efficacious measures wherever he went to re-establish good order and cause piety to flourish. He took a lively interest in the salvation of each soul, he sent for the person, exhorted and reprimanded him, and when the wound seemed to forebode mortification, he resorted to violent remedies; if his own arm proved too weak for this, he demanded the aid of the powerful and great. He very often begged for the support of the King, and took no rest until he had attained his point.

In the course of his pastoral visitations, Alphonso also showed the warmth of his charity towards the poor. He inquired into the miseries of all from the curés and others. He strove particularly to know those whose houses were irregular, and who made their children sleep pêle-mêle in the same bed. When he was convinced that their indigence was real, he endeavoured

to supply beds, clothes, and all other necessaries; but he cared most for widows, as well as young women in danger, and spared no expense in aiding them.

His charity was equally shown towards the sick, above all, the sick poor. As soon as he arrived in any place he inquired about them most solicitously; he went to visit them himself, and consoled them by his words and by his alms. He recommended them to the care of the curés and rich, and desired their medicines to be furnished at his expense. At Airola he heard that a man was grievously afflicted with the stone, and that the physicians had abandoned him; he went to visit him immediately, confessed him, and encouraged him to suffer in patience, and prepare himself for a good death.

He visited every place in his diocese without exception; he staid eight or ten days in the little villages, sometimes twelve or even fifteen, and he did not leave until he had established order and reformed abuses.

Alphonso did not like novelty. He strengthened good things wherever he found them, and reformed the evil which had been introduced. Don Francis Mustillo wrote to him to have the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel of Mount Carmel at St. Agatha, alleging for reason that it was an ancient parish. Alphonso was ready to agree, but when the chapter represented to him that the church was not such as he had been told, he deferred making a decision, saying, "My principle is that a bishop ought to change no-

thing except to repair an injustice or to destroy a manifest abuse." The canons and present discipline of the church were his invariable rule, and not abuses, whose long toleration formed no authorisation in his eyes.

The sins of the people made him reflect on his own, and he offered himself unceasingly to the Lord as a sacrifice. His table was the same as at St. Agatha wherever he went, both for himself and for his suite, and he never omitted his seasonings of bitter herbs. He lodged with the Dominican Fathers at Durazzano, and during dinner, which he took in the refectory with these religious, he did not cease to insist to the prior on having frugality at table; on which Father Fanzolini was a little vexed, and said to him one day, "Your Lordship may fast if you fancy it; as for us, we cannot imitate it." On one fasting day when he saw various things prepared for supper he asked the prior if he did not know that it was a vigil: "I know it perfectly well," replied the prior, "but it is necessary to prepare all these things in order that each one may use them according to his conscience."

During the visitation, he did not exempt himself from mortifying himself daily by hair-cloths and disciplines. Once he forgot the instruments of penance in setting out for Durazzano. He immediately sent his servant Alexis to seek for them secretly. Sister Mary Theresa Coscia, a religious recluse, has attested, that during his Lordship's visitation in the country of Real-Valle, on making his bed in the morning, the sheets were found all

spotted with blood, and small stones were found in the bed. Besides these penances, he took nothing but broth and very little fruit at dinner. Don Anthony Scottini, valet de chambre of Prince de la Riccia, at Airola, has also attested that on the departure of his Lordship he found nine stones as large as an egg on the mattress. Another person assured Father Anthony Gandino, that he had observed that he was covered with hair-cloths during the time of his visitation. For a great number of years, and until his infirmities became extreme, he carried the covering of his straw bed about with him; and wherever he arrived, he had it filled with straw, and did not use the bed which had been prepared for him.

He never permitted anything, however innocent, to be done in the house with him which could attract the admiration of others. One year his brother Hercules arrived with his wife at Airola; they lodged in a part of the prince's palace, which was separated from that where Alphonso lived. He found that they played the harpsichord to amuse themselves and a few gentlemen in the evening; he forbade them to go on with these musical parties. He said to Don Hercules, "Take care that a bishop's house is not turned into a place of diversion."

In the morning he occupied himself in meditating on sacred things from the moment of his awaking, and in the evening, after his own prayer, he united his family to recite the rosary and the other accustomed prayers in common.

He took all possible pains to prevent being a

burthen to his people during his journeys; his disinterestedness was such that he always returned from his rounds destitute of money and burthened with debts. During the course of these visitations he scrupulously observed the law he had made to himself, never to accept any present. A gentleman at Frasso thought he might send him a plate of laitage. As soon as Alphonso saw it, he frowned, severely reprimanded his secretary who had received it, and ordered him to take it back, or else pay its value. Don John Manco, a priest and one of the first gentlemen of Airola, took it into his head to make him a similar present. The porter was told, "Either take what that is worth, or carry back your butter." Don Manco was offended at this proceeding, and when Alphonso tried to justify himself, this gentleman replied, "I do not wish to hear anything. See this Mgr. Crepin with his troublesome austerity!" then getting more and more irritated he said, "Plague take Mgr. Crepin, and him who consecrated him!"

Alphonso carried delicacy so far as to buy all that he required during his circuit, and if he accepted the hospitality of the Dominican Fathers, to avoid paining them, he repaid the monastery on his return to St. Agatha by sending them a great quantity of wax and several of his works. The prince de la Riccia ordered his man of business to furnish his Lordship with a gift as soon as he stopped at Airola; Alphonso accepted the prince's apartments, but constantly refused his

other offers; he wished even to pay for wood and lights.

Through the same disinterested spirit he reduced the fees of the visitation to nearly nothing, choosing for his model in that among all his predecessors, Mgr. Albim, whose memory he held in great veneration. He forbade all the members of his household to accept or solicit presents, after the too prevalent custom. "Keep to St. Francis of Sales," said he, "ask for nothing and refuse nothing."

Such conduct gained him general esteem and respect, so much so that people thought themselves happy if they could obtain a morsel of his garment. Don Joshua of Donato told me, that his mitres were several times found without pendants, and one day a piece was cut off his cloak. These relics were very carefully preserved; they were applied to the sick, and everywhere they related what miraculous cures had been produced by their touch.

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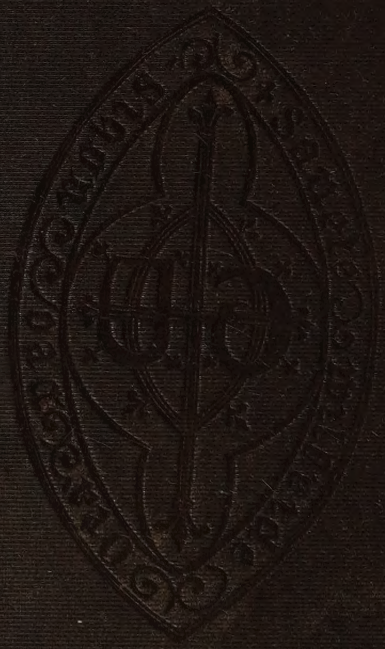
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